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**Operations and Services  
General Public Weather Services, NWSPD 10-5  
Prioritizing Products and Workload Activities, NWSI 10-503**

**PRIORITIZING PRODUCTS AND WORKLOAD ACTIVITIES FOR WESTERN  
REGION FORECAST OFFICES (WFOs)**

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**NOTICE:** This publication is available at: <http://www.nws.noaa.gov/directives/>.

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**SUMMARY OF REVISIONS:** This directive supersedes NWS Western Regional Supplement 14-2003, dated February 18, 2005.

The following changes were made in this issuance:

1. Added services wherever products were mentioned in order to emphasize the importance of those activities during high impact events at WFOs.
2. TWEBs were removed from the Supplement since they are no longer issued.
3. Relaying Tsunami Warnings and Volcanic Ash information were added.
4. Longer fused products were moved from Category One to Category Two priority.
5. All post editing of routine legacy forecast products originally created by formatters was moved from Category Two to Category Three priority.

Signed

12/22/08

Robert Tibi  
Director, Western Region

Date

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1. Description: This Supplement provides guidance for prioritizing hydro-meteorological products and activities associated with the execution of those products and services at National Weather Service (NWS) Weather Forecast Offices (WFOs). This guidance applies to both *normal* operations and during back-up.

Since written instructions cannot address every situation, forecasters must use sound professional judgement in prioritizing warnings, watches, statements, forecasts, services and preparation of gridded fields of meteorological parameters as they impact the NWS mission of protecting life and property. **Protection of life and property takes precedence in all situations.**

2. Instructions: To assist WFOs in prioritizing office duties including public, hydrology, aviation, marine, and fire weather, the following is guidance for warnings, watches, and other products and services that have priority. WFOs may expand upon this guidance to incorporate guidelines which meet unique local requirements, as appropriate.

2.1 Role of WFO Management and Lead Forecasters: WFO management and lead forecasters will remain mindful of the need to pro actively augment WFO staffing before and during major weather/high impact events in their County Warning and Forecast Area. Each WFO will have a Severe Weather Operations Plan (High Impact Event Operations Plan) which identifies appropriate staffing levels necessary to perform the work required by a severe weather/flood/fire outbreak. The lead forecaster is responsible for determining work assignments allocated to his/her shift. This includes, augmenting staffing for high impact events or during times of increased workload and reallocating work assignments during benign weather and/or decreased workload. During benign weather, lead forecasters shall ensure staff resources are utilized in the most efficient manner. This will often mean taking actions to free up time for shift workers to work on training, research, and/or focal point responsibilities through re-assignment of duties.

Products and associated support activities have been subdivided into three categories. Time sensitivity was taken into consideration as to the products and services ranking. Individual circumstances may change the ranking or category of products.

**CATEGORY ONE PRIORITY:** These products are considered critical to saving lives and property. They will be prepared, disseminated, and services executed, as quickly and accurately as possible. Overtime is authorized.

**CATEGORY TWO PRIORITY:** These products and services should not be delayed for more than one hour. Overtime is authorized to avoid excessive delays.

**CATEGORY THREE PRIORITY:** These are products and services that can be delayed until all higher priority duties have been executed. Overtime is not authorized.

Prioritization of services and activities associated with the preparation and dissemination of a product are ranked the same as the product. For example, collecting or making calls to spotters associated with a severe thunderstorm and dissemination of the severe thunderstorm warning have the same priority with regard to services and activities as the severe thunderstorm warning. The product and services list is generic in nature and is not an attempt to categorize all NWS generated products/services.

2.2 Category One Priority: The following products and services are deemed critical to saving lives and property. In the event two or more priority one products/services are required, the order of completion will depend upon which event presents the greatest risk to life and property. For example a spot forecast for an emerging wildfire which threatens an urban wildland interface may present a higher risk of threat to life than a severe thunderstorm with 3/4" hail, and hence, the spot should be issued first.

Forecasters must exercise judgement when determining the order of which category one products and services are accomplished first. Accordingly the following category one products/services are NOT listed in order of priority.

- a. Short-fused warnings [flash flood, tornado, severe thunderstorm, red flag (short-fused events), airport weather warnings, special marine warnings, urban and small stream advisories] and appropriate follow-up statements to these products including follow up short-term forecasts (NOWs).
- b. Relay tsunami warnings from the Tsunami Warning Center via NOAA Weather Radio (EAS).
- c. Amending Terminal Aviation Forecasts (TAFs) in deteriorating weather situations.
- d. Issuing spot forecasts for wildfires during red flag conditions or highly erratic/critical fire weather conditions.
- e. Issuing spot forecasts for Hazmat incidents or search and rescue operations.
- f. Issuing tornado, severe thunderstorm, flash flood watches and fire weather watches for dry thunderstorms.

- g. Relay volcanic ash information from Washington Volcanic Ash Advisory Center and/or Volcano Observatory to the public via NWR and/or volcanic ash advisory (non-precipitation warning).
- h. Non scheduled impact services to emergency response and media in support of short fused, high impact events, such as internet weather briefings and/or Instant Messaging (IEM) Chat coordination.

2.3 Category Two Priority: Not listed in order of priority.

- a. Issuing long-fused warnings and watches (winter weather, non-precipitation, river, red flag (long fused), storm/gale/small craft advisories, coastal flood). Note: This may require preparation of a Hazard Grid to generate a text product via IFPS.
- b. Providing updated Quantitative Precipitation Forecast (QPF) during period of flooding or potential flooding.
- c. Preparation of grids from IFPS. Grids prepared via IFPS should be monitored and “kept current” round-the-clock as new forecast information becomes available and is analyzed. Accordingly, this activity can be temporarily suspended for short periods of time to allow for completion of higher priority services. WFOs dealing with major outbreaks of severe weather/floods/fires are encouraged to request their back-up offices to monitor and change their grids, as appropriate.
  - Automated issuance of scheduled or updating public/marine/fire weather/routine QPF forecasts via grids and formatters.
- d. Amending TAFs for improving conditions.
- e. Issuing scheduled TAFs.
- f. Issuing spot forecasts for ongoing wildfires under stable fire weather conditions.
- g. Issuing event driven NOWs during less critical weather than in short- fused warning situations (e.g., as in category one). This includes “graphic-casts”.
- h. Issuing river statements and outlooks used for the purpose of relaying critical flow information.
- i. Non scheduled impact services to emergency response officials and media such as internet weather briefing and/or Instant Messaging (IEM) Chat coordination for long fused, high impact events, and routine internet and/or telephone weather briefings.

2.4 Category Three Priority:

- a. Manual post editing of formatting produced public/marine/fire weather/routine QPF forecasts.
- b. Issuing spot forecasts for prescribed fire.
- c. Issuing state forecasts (SFT/P).
- d. Issuing area forecast discussions (AFD).
- e. Issuing site-specific forecasts for land management activities such as spray projects, aerial surveys, etc.
- f. Issuing daily river statements and outlooks used for informational or for recreational purposes.
- g. Preparing climate summaries, temperature tables, etc.
- h. Answering routine/general phone calls from customers.
- i. Issuing drought information statements.