

**NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE INSTRUCTION 10-1803
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Operations and Services

SERVICE EDUCATION AND FEEDBACK

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

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signed
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Date

Service Education and Feedback

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1. Objective. The objectives of service education and feedback are to assess user needs, build customer and partner knowledge of our services and products, increase awareness and preparedness, and use customer and partner feedback to improve services.

2. Overview. All National Weather Service (NWS) employees participate in service outreach activities including service education and feedback. The NWS Strategic Plan states that it is a customer-oriented, performance-based organization. Reaching out to our customers and partners helps us develop the services our citizens expect.

2.1. Role of Warning Coordination Meteorologists (WCMs) and National Service Program Leaders. WCMs are the primary NWS service representatives. They are knowledgeable about all NWS service programs for their area and manage the office’s service outreach activities. In Weather Service Headquarters, each Office of Climate, Water, Weather Services (OCWWS) service division and service branch has an individual responsible for national service outreach for their service programs.

3. Conducting Effective Education and Feedback Activities. Yearly service outreach activities should include for NWS strategic outreach themes, goals in the NWS Strategic Plan, regional and local service goals, and awareness and preparedness information.

3.1. Customer and Partner Education. Where possible, customer and partner education activities should target trade groups, diverse community organizations, and professional societies to maximize the number of people contacted. Many of these organizations have newsletters or other communication mechanisms to communicate our information. NWS offices should also draft articles for the OCWWS *Aware Report*. The *Aware Report* highlights NWS services and individual office best practices. Send information for the *Aware Report* to the OCWWS

Awareness Branch. Encourage partners to draft information for the *Aware Report* illustrating how they work with us and use our information. NOAA/Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) joint training courses are excellent tools for educating emergency managers about our products and services, and awareness and preparedness information. Field offices should use these courses to train emergency managers who can then go out and conduct further training activities. Needs for additional courses and changes to the present courses should be communicated to the OCWWS Awareness Branch.

3.2. Customer and Partner Feedback. Feedback from our customers and partners regarding our products and services is critical. It enables the NWS to constantly improve our services/products, respond to changing needs of our customers and to regularly evaluate our effectiveness. An excellent time to gather information on our services is following significant events. Any meetings with emergency managers, local officials, and the media should be scheduled at the convenience of the partners. There are limitations on how we can obtain feedback.

3.2.1. The Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA) The PRA requires that all Federal agencies get clearance from the Office of Management and Budget before surveying its customers or collecting information from the public. The statute defines "collection of information" broadly. It covers any identical questions posed to 10 or more members of the public--whether voluntary or mandatory, whether written, electronic, or oral.

Items that are covered under the PRA include: customer surveys; Web surveys; federal surveys sent to state, territorial, local, and tribal governments; application forms; and focus groups using predetermined scripts.

Areas exempt from PRA regulations include: employee conferences; complaint systems; suggestion systems; town halls; listening sessions; and other meetings with customers (driven by an agenda rather than "questions"). These conversations are either one-on-one or structured so loosely that the questions are not "identical" within the meaning of the PRA. OCWWS will forward to NOAA all requests for OMB clearance.

Appendix A contains additional information about the PRA as well as alternative method for collecting information. Offices are encouraged to make copies of appendix A and have them readily available as a quick reference.

APPENDIX A - Customer and Other Surveys

The Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA) generally requires agencies to get OMB clearance before requesting facts or opinions from ten or more persons by the use of standard questions. This holds true regardless of whether the information is gathered by the use of forms, a Web site, phone or personal interviews, and about any other method; regardless of whether responses are mandatory or voluntary; and regardless of whether the agency or a contractor does the actual collecting of information. Clearance is needed when a rule contains an information requirement, regardless of the number of people affected.

There are a few ways you can gather information without needing PRA clearance.

Public Meetings - No clearance is needed if attendees at a public meeting are just asked to comment or give suggestions on the program or subject in question. General discussions about programs and goals present no problem. If, however, the group is gathered for the purpose of having attendees respond to a specific set of formatted questions, then the PRA does apply.

Solicitations for General Comments - No clearance is needed if you offer the public the opportunity to make comments or suggestions, so long as you do not ask specific questions other than self-identification (name, address, e-mail). Many Web sites, for instance, offer a box or e-mail address for people to give comments, and that is not a clearance problem.

If a planned survey is subject to the PRA clearance process, the normal clearance process is lengthy--about 5 months. Clearances for information requirements in proposed rules actually take less time, about 2 months. A special fast-track review process is available for certain types of customer surveys. Information about these processes can be found at NOAA's PRA Web site at: www.rdc.noaa.gov/~pra.

Any OMB clearance for an information collection only applies to the specific circumstances described in the clearance request. A survey approved for one office, for instance, cannot be used by other offices without going back to OMB. This restriction even applies to questions in NOAA's "generic" customer survey clearance.