

Department of Commerce • National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration • National Weather Service

***NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE INSTRUCTION 10-2003
NOVEMBER 29, 2006***

***Operations and Services
Forensic Services, NWSPD 10-20
RECORDS RETENTION***

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

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SUMMARY OF REVISIONS: This directive supersedes NWS Instruction 10-2003, dated October 29, 2004. Changes:

Added a reference to NWSI 1-801

Deleted paragraph 3.b. mention of pilot weather briefing logs and renumbered the remaining sections.

Minor grammatical corrections through the document.

//SIGNED//

November 15, 2006

Dennis H. McCarthy
Director, Office of Climate, Water, and Weather Services

Date

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1. Overview. National Weather Service (NWS) records, which may be needed at a later time for accident investigations and litigation, are retained and disposed of in accordance with National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Records Disposition Handbook instructions, NWS Instruction 1-801 NWS Records Management, and this directive. The National Environmental Satellite, Data, and Information Service (NESDIS) performs most NWS records retention functions. A separate Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the NESDIS National Climatic Data Center (NCDC) and NWS detail the retention of NWS service products.

2. Service Product Retention. Service products issued by NWS offices are transmitted on the Advanced Weather Interactive Processing System (AWIPS), National Center Advanced Weather Interactive Processing System (NAWIPS), Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), or Department of Defense (DOD) communication systems to an NWS Telecommunications Gateway (NWSTG) server. The products are then electronically transferred to the NCDC to meet the minimum 5-year service records retention requirement. NWS offices are responsible for a limited short-term records retention. Each NWS office should be able to electronically retrieve and print hard copies of their forecast products issued within the first 14 days of issuance. Service products retained include:

a. Observations. Observation reports originated by NWS, FAA, or DOD and transmitted through the NWSTG server will be retained. These reports may include, but are not limited to, surface observations (including Automated Surface Observing System and Automated Weather Observing System reports, Marine Buoys and the Coastal Marine Area Network (C-MAN)), pilot reports, upper air reports, marine reports, and automated buoy observations.

b. Analysis and Forecast products: All official NWS routine and non-routine environmental data, analysis, and forecast products derived from NWS warning and forecast programs and transmitted through the NWSTG regardless of format (alphanumeric, graphic, or digital format).

3. Miscellaneous Records Retention. Miscellaneous product records commonly required in accident investigations/litigation, other documentation support activities, and related retention requirements are listed below.

a. Texts of written weather briefings, hard copy graphic records, and copies of the Daily Record of Facility Operation log or equivalent prepared by the Center Weather Service Units (CWSU): Retained for 30 days at the CWSU and from 30 days to 5 years at the CWSU or the NWS office having administrative responsibility for the unit.

b. Any fire weather forecasts, warnings, and advisories not entered into AWIPS:

Retained at the originating office for five (5) years. Examples of these are IMET products, and spot forecast products issued directly to the user via internet or facsimile transmission.

c. Station Duty Manual (SDM). NWS offices maintaining a SDM will retain files containing all superseded and/or canceled operational instructions for a minimum of five years from the date of cancellation. Each page of the current SDM and the historical SDM file must be dated.

d. Permanent NWS regional directive supplements and other operational instructions to NWS field offices: Retain historical file at issuing regional headquarters for a minimum of five (5) years from the date of cancellation.

e. Weather Surveillance Radar (WSR-88D) Data. Archive levels and the method of distribution to the NCDC are detailed in Part A of the Federal Meteorological Handbook (FMH) No. 11, Chapter 5, Archiving; and the NWS Observing Handbook No. 9, WSR-88D Operations, Chapter 6. NCDC is responsible for permanently archiving WSR-88D data and producing hard copy images.