

October 11, 2002

Consideration of Hardship Transfers

PURPOSE: This policy sets forth the criteria for consideration of requests for transfer due to hardship.

POLICY: NWS mission needs are the primary criteria for determining employee placement. NWS will review requests for hardship transfers in a fair and expeditious manner, and as vacancies permit. NWS does not guarantee placement. This policy is governed by applicable law, rule, regulation, Government-wide/Department/Agency policy, and the NWS-NWSEO Collective Bargaining Agreement. This policy does not apply to emergency situations when immediate action is necessary to protect the health and welfare of the employee and/or immediate family.

CATEGORIES: Hardship transfers will be considered for any of the following categories.

CATEGORY I: The medical condition of the employee or the employee's spouse or children residing in the employee's household requires relocation to a geographical area deemed medically necessary to improve or maintain health or receive health services.

CATEGORY II: When the employee or employee's spouse is the primary caretaker of a dependent parent, and the medical condition of the parent requires the employee or employee's spouse to relocate to another geographic area.

CATEGORY III: In cases of a separated family, where the transfer of an employee to another geographical area would allow the employee to maintain contact with his/her dependent children. Not all separations from children will be considered a hardship. Factors that should be considered are:

- whether the separation was voluntary
- distance and ease of commute
- length of time of separation
- age & health of children
- circumstances unique to the individual, e.g. previous requests for hardship transfer.

APPLICATION PROCEDURES: Requests for hardship transfer consideration should be sent to:

National Weather Service
Hardship Transfer Request, W/CF03
1325 East-West Highway
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Requests must include the following:

- A statement the employee is requesting a hardship transfer.
- The eligible position(s), grade(s), and geographical location(s) the employee is requesting.
- The category of hardship under which the employee is applying, the specific reason(s) justifying the hardship need, and all supporting documentation, including for Category I and II requests, satisfactory records from professional health care providers.
- An updated SF-171 or resume and a copy of the employee's last performance appraisal.
- A release signed by the employee and/or the employee's relative authorizing the NWS to contact appropriate sources, as applicable, for the purpose of validating/clarifying any supplied documentation.

ACCEPTANCE: The NWS Chief Financial Officer (CFO), or his designee, will review applications from employees not in the bargaining unit. The NWS CFO and the NWSEO President, or their designees, will jointly review applications from employees in the bargaining unit. Upon acceptance, applicants will receive consideration as described in the next section. Applicants will be notified of their acceptance/non-acceptance within 30 days. There is no appeal of the decision. An employee may re-apply based on new facts. An employee may withdraw an application from further consideration at any time by sending a written request to the above address.

CONSIDERATION PROCEDURES: Upon acceptance of an application, the employee's name will be placed on a hardship transfer candidate list, along with the employee's current position information and duty location, and the requested duty location(s). The list will be provided to NWS selecting officials for use as a recruitment source. When a selecting official decides to open a vacancy announcement, he/she will review the hardship transfer candidate list for employees requesting that duty location and notify such employees of the vacancy announcement. Hardship transfer candidate employees must apply for the vacancy to be considered. The selecting official will take into consideration hardship transfer as a factor when making a selection.

OTHER PROVISIONS: Provisions of this policy are excluded from the negotiated grievance procedure.

Employee position swaps, regardless of underlying rationale or motivation, are not covered by this policy.

The employee must meet minimum qualification standards for any position requested.

NWS will pay travel and relocation expenses for an employee's permanent change of station in accordance with applicable law and regulation.