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

**PRIORITIZING SERVICES, INFORMATION AND WORKLOAD ACTIVITIES FOR
WESTERN REGION OFFICES**

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SUMMARY OF REVISIONS: This directive supersedes NWS Western Regional Supplement 14-2003, dated January 9, 2009.

The following changes were made in this issuance:

1. Added “Services and Information” to the title of the supplement, and changed to apply to all WR offices (not just WFOs).
2. Changed products to information throughout document as appropriate.
3. Added “Background” section for examples of IDSS and to highlight importance of IDSS to NWS mission and Strategic Plan.
4. Moved paragraph about roles of management and senior forecasters/senior hydrologists from the category definition section into a new section 3 “Roles”. Added wording about providing IDSS to state/regional customers, as needed, to that section.
5. Changed the name of section 4 from “Instructions” to “Priority Categories” and added “risk” to ranking criteria.
6. Under Priority 2 service (in section 4), changed - “not be delayed for more than one hour” to - “be accomplished as soon as is practical”.
7. Deleted the outdated priority lists in sections 4.1, 4.2, and 4.3.
8. Updated all categories (1, 2 and 3) for IDSS depending on the situation.

Signed
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03/19/12
Date

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1. **Description:** This Supplement provides guidance for prioritizing workload activities associated with Impact-based Decision Support Services (IDSS), and the creation and dissemination of hydro-meteorological information at all Western Region (WR) field offices. This guidance applies to both normal operations and during back-up.

Since written instructions cannot address every situation, forecasters must use sound professional judgment in prioritizing services, warnings, watches, statements, 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. **Background:** Impact-based Decision Support Services are at the very core of the NWS’ mission and the NWS’ Strategic Plan of Building a Weather-Ready Nation. We must provide these services in order to help core partners and the general public make better decisions regarding life, property, and economy. Weather Forecast Offices (WFO), Center Weather Service Units (CWSU), and River Forecast Centers (RFC) are increasingly called upon to support customers before, during, and after high impact events. This support begins with an accurate depiction of forecast and warning conditions using the gridded forecast database and text warnings, watches, and advisories; but goes far beyond products to include valuable services designed to aid in their decision-making. These services are often, unscheduled, and/or temporary and may even be non-traditional; they include but are not limited to:

- ad hoc hazards briefings
- preparation and dissemination of graphical information and multi-media presentations
- preparation and dissemination of site-specific forecasts
- provision of hazard information in multiple formats based on major partner needs
- directed notifications of upcoming significant weather to core partners and customers
- participation in web-based and mobile technologies as an interactive dialogue with our customers (i.e. social media, chat, etc.)
- on-site support

These types of services continue to evolve, with new methods of customer-driven IDSS activities being developed as needs become known and technology changes.

3. Roles: WFOs, CWSUs, and RFCs will generally provide IDSS and appropriate information for customers in their areas of responsibility. On occasion, offices may be tasked by State Liaison Offices (SLOs) or the Western Region Operations Center (ROC) to provide input or prepare portions of IDSS information and briefings to statewide or regional entities. Management at the SLOs or WR ROC personnel will coordinate with field office management where practical, but at times, quickly- evolving events may require a fast response from operational personnel at all offices involved without office management coordination.

Field management and Senior (Lead) Forecasters/RFC Senior Hydrologists must be aware of the need to proactively augment staffing before, during, and occasionally after major weather/high impact events in their areas. Each Field Office will have a Severe Weather Operations Plan (or equivalent High Impact Event Operations Plan) which identifies appropriate staffing levels necessary to perform the work required due to high impact event (such as a severe weather/flood/blizzard/fire outbreak). The Senior Forecaster/Senior Hydrologist is responsible for determining the allocation of work assignments during his/her shift. This may include augmenting staff for increased workload related to high impact events, as well as reallocating work assignments during benign weather and/or decreased workload. During benign weather, Senior Forecasters/RFC Senior Hydrologists will ensure staff resources are utilized in the most efficient manner. This will often mean taking actions to free up time for operational staff to work on IDSS, training, research, and/or focal point responsibilities through the re-assignment of duties.

4. Priority Categories: To assist field offices in prioritizing office responsibilities during a shift, the following is guidance for production and dissemination of IDSS services, warnings, watches, and other information.

Products and associated support activities have been subdivided into three categories. Time sensitivity and risk were taken into consideration as to the ranking. Individual circumstances may change the ranking or category. Not all situations can be accounted for and at times forecaster judgment needs to be used in ranking the importance of products based on her/his understanding of the severity of an event and the needs of the customers.

CATEGORY ONE PRIORITY: These services are considered critical to saving lives and property. In the event two or more category one 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 1" hail and hence, the spot should be issued first. Category one information will be prepared, disseminated, and services executed, as quickly and accurately as possible. Overtime is authorized.

CATEGORY TWO PRIORITY: These services should be accomplished as soon as is practical, taking into account customer/partner time constraints, available staffing, and significance of the event. Overtime is authorized to avoid excessive delays.

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

Activities associated with the preparation and dissemination of a product or service should be prioritized the same as the actual product or service. 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.

The examples below are generic in nature and not an attempt to categorize all NWS generated products/services.

4.1 Category One Priority: These services include short duration warnings, watches and forecasts for high impact events, and appropriate follow-up statements to these products, considered critical to saving lives and property. Category one high impact events normally occur, or are expected to occur, generally within 6 to 12 hours of the forecast. Examples include (but not limited to) flash flood, tsunami, tornado, critical TAF amendments and spot forecasts for Hazmat incidents. Further, nonscheduled IDSS in support of imminent short term high impact events are considered category one (see Section 2). Forecasters must exercise judgment when determining the order of which information and services are accomplished first.

4.2 Category Two Priority: These services include long duration warnings, watches and forecasts, and appropriate follow-up statements to these products. As a general guideline, priority two events normally occur, or are expected to occur, within 12 to 72 hours of the forecast. Examples include (but not limited to) winter weather, main stem river flooding, and storm/gale warnings and small craft advisories. Additionally, nonscheduled IDSS to core partners (Section 2) in support of long duration high impact events are considered category two. Forecasters must exercise judgment when determining the order of which information and services are accomplished first.

4.3 Category Three Priority: These services include routine activities of a non-time critical nature. Examples include spot forecasts for prescribed fire during the off season; area forecast discussions and issuing drought information and/or climate statements. Nonscheduled IDSS to customers can be considered category three if the information is routine or not time critical.