

NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE INSTRUCTION 10-2003

January 26, 2011

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 November 29, 2006. Changes include:

1. Updated certifying official.
2. Updated references cited in text. FMH-11 is the sole reference on the WSR-88D radar system.
3. Added a retention recommendation for local or region products derived from NDFD and NDGD that differ from the national products. This will capture the local forecasts presented to the user via forecast office web pages.

/signed/

January 12, 2011

David B. Caldwell
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 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 should include the date of its preparation. See NWSI 10-1608, *Station Duty Manual*, for further information about SDMs for WFOs, CWSUs, and RFCs.

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 the Federal Meteorological Handbook (FMH) No. 11, Part A, Chapter 5, Archiving; and Part D, Chapter 2 (section 2.3.2), Archive Level II and III. NCDC permanently archives WSR-88D data and provides a means for reproducing images.

f. National Digital Forecast Database (NDFD) and National Digital Guidance Database (NDGD) files and products posted on national servers will be archived at NCDC.