

NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE INSTRUCTION 10-2004

July 11, 2007

Operations and Services

Forensic Services, NWSPD 10-20

ACCIDENT NOTIFICATION AND RESPONSE

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

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SUMMARY OF REVISIONS: This directive supersedes NWSI 10-2004, Accident Notification and Response, dated November 16, 2004. This directive has reporting requirements similar to NWSI 10-1603. It is anticipated that this NWSI will be incorporated into NWSI 10-1603 in the future.

Changes include:

Added a sentence in the Objectives section that NCEP prediction centers may have occasion to report accidents occurring as a result of weather.

Added definitions of major aviation and marine accidents, and notification procedures as a new section 3. All sections after section 3 have been renumbered as a result.

All NWS field offices, except those listed in section 4.1, are now required to contact the ASOS Operations Maintenance Center (AOMC) to obtain observation data sets in the event of an accident near the NWS office's respective ASOS site.

Added examples of For the Record Memorandum for major aviation and marine accidents in Appendices A and B.

//SIGNED//

June 27, 2007

Dr. James E. Hoke

Date

Acting Director, Office of Climate, Water, and Weather Services

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1. Objective. The primary instruction for reporting significant events of all types to regional and national headquarters is NWSI 10-1603. The purpose of NWSI 10-2004 is to provide additional reporting instructions for those events which may trigger a federal safety investigation, or litigation involving the government due to the weather encountered or forecast at the time and place the mishap occurred. This instruction details procedures and responsibilities for National Weather Service (NWS) National Centers for Environmental Prediction (NCEP) centers, such as Ocean Prediction Center (OPC), Tropical Prediction Center (TPC), and Aviation Weather Center (AWC), the Alaska Aviation Weather Unit (AAWU), and Weather Forecast Offices (WFOs) with county warning areas, in providing timely, efficient, and factual notification to NWS Headquarters (NWSH) and Regional Headquarters (RH), of any known major aviation or marine accident where weather is suspected to be a factor.

2. Local Station Pre-accident Planning. NWS offices will coordinate with the nearest National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) and other appropriate Government offices (e.g., Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), United States Coast Guard), and with civil authorities to ensure prompt notification of major aircraft or marine accidents within their area of responsibility when weather is suspected to be a factor. NWS offices will prepare and use an itemized list of local steps taken when notified of such an accident.

3. Definitions.

a. Major Aircraft Accident – involves any of the following (Note: this differs from a formal accident as defined by the FAA and indicated in section 4.3.1 of this instruction):

- (1) Weather related (as determined by the Duty Forecaster)
 - (2) One or more fatalities on a Commercial/Scheduled or General Aviation aircraft, with weather being a suspected factor.
 - (3) Possible weather related injuries or fatalities of widely known public figures.
 - (4) Other aviation event which generates (or may generate) extensive media coverage.
- b. Major Marine Accident – involves any of the following:
- (1) One or more fatalities, with weather being a suspected factor (as determined by the Duty Forecaster),
 - (2) Loss of vessel greater than or equal to 40 feet and/or 100 gross tons, with weather being a suspected factor,
 - (3) Property damage (vessel and/or cargo) estimated at \$500K or more, with weather being a suspected factor,
 - (4) Widespread marine pollution (oil or hazardous substances), with or without weather being a suspected factor,
 - (5) Widely known public figures, with weather being a suspected factor,
 - (6) Other marine event which generates (or may generate) national media attention.

c. Notification Reports – there are two types of Notification Reports – the “For The Record” (FTR) report and the “Other Aviation” (OAV) report. The choice of which type of report required to be issued will be based on factors as detailed in the following sections. Note: The FTR is sent by RH officials based on information provided by WFOs and/or other sources. See sections 4.2.1, 4.3.2 and/or 4.4.

For both types of notification reports, time is of the essence. A notification report should not be unnecessarily delayed for an undue amount of time. Use of “UNKN” or “N/A” may be used so that the report will get to the interested people in a timely manner. Situations vary, and it is up to the Duty Forecaster to determine when the FTR or OAV report should be sent.

4. Procedures Following Notification of a Major Aviation or Marine Accident Where Weather is Suspected to be a Factor.

4.1 Surface Observations.

4.1.1 When notified of an major **aviation** accident within a 25 nautical-mile radius of an NWS office having Automated Surface Observing System (ASOS) augmentation responsibilities (currently, only Williston ND and certain sites in Alaska and Pacific Region have this responsibility) and weather is suspected to be a factor, the office should take, record, and disseminate a special observation in accordance with applicable weather observation instruction handbooks used by NWS. In circumstances where an ASOS platform, whether augmented or completely automated, provides observations at, or nearest to, the mishap site, the NWS office with forecast responsibility where the ASOS is located will request the ASOS Operations and

Monitoring Center (AOMC) download the pertinent sensor data sets. Usually, one-minute data sets from 1 hour before the time of the accident, to 1 hour after the time of the accident will suffice. However, at the discretion of the Duty Forecaster, different periods and increments of sensor data sets may be requested or downloaded. Time is of the essence to request AOMC download of the sensor data. The data may be downloaded up to 11 hours after the incident before it begins to get overwritten with later information. The AOMC can be reached at 1-800-242-8194/8895, or aomc@noaa.gov. This data should be retained at the issuing office for 30 days, except when instructed otherwise by the Forensic Services Manager.

4.1.2 When notified of a major **marine** accident, download the data for the last 12 hours from the closest marine observation to the accident. The wind and wave data may be obtained from buoys, C-Mans, and/or any platform available at the time of the accident. This data should be retained at the issuing office for 30 days, except when instructed otherwise by the Forensic Services Manager.

4.2 The Notification Reporting Process.

4.2.1 Method of Transmission. RH officials transmit notification reports via the significant events notification email list (nws.sig.ops@noaa.gov). RH officials should use their discretion and good judgment whether a telephone call, in addition to a report, is needed to notify NWSH officials (e.g., a weather-related accident involving an air carrier and resulting in casualties occurs during non-administrative hours). Home telephone numbers of key NWS officials are included in the current Hydrometeorology Duty Officer Manual maintained by the Performance and Awareness Division in the Office of Climate, Water, and Weather Services.

4.2.2 Purpose. The notification report provides timely, factual, and best available information to the Assistant Administrator for Weather Services and other concerned NWS officials in order for them to:

- a. Brief key officials of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the Department of Commerce;
- b. Respond to queries from outside agencies;
- c. Initiate an internal inquiry, if required; and
- d. Take prompt remedial action, if required.

4.2.3 Initiating Offices. The NWS office with county warning responsibility for the accident site will prepare and issue the notification report, except in Alaska where the Alaska Aviation Weather Unit (AAWU) prepares and issues reports for all qualifying accidents for the entire state of Alaska. For occurrences outside the contiguous 48 states, the NWS office with public warning responsibility for the accident location should prepare/issue a notification report provided it has sufficient information. In some instances an NCEP center will be the office with knowledge of an accident and will have the responsibility for initiating a notification report.

4.3 Notification Reports (Aviation). When notified by the FAA, or otherwise receiving notice of a major aircraft accident, the appropriate NWS office will submit a notification report as soon as possible, except as outlined in the following.

Discretion and judgment will be required in connection with notification reports for missing aircraft and military aircraft accidents. When an aircraft is missing, especially for two to three days or more, the location, time, and the weather factor circumstances of the accident may be difficult to ascertain. In general, a report should be submitted when there is the capability to provide factual and best available information to meet the purposes in section 4.2.1. The report should include the best information available at the time without unnecessary delays.

Background information for a military aircraft accident is frequently difficult to obtain. Moreover, military crews normally use weather products generated by the military. The submission of reports related to military accidents should be limited to those cases where sufficient background information is available and the accident is known to have resulted in one or more civilian casualties or significant property damage.

4.3.1 Notification from the FAA. FAA Order 8020.11, Aircraft Accident and Incident Notification, Investigation and Reporting, requires the FAA air traffic field facility which receives the first report of an aircraft accident or incident to notify the NWS office closest to the accident or incident site. As an alternative, a formal agreement between overlapping FAA/NWS regions, FAA Order 8020.11, allows FAA facilities within the signatory FAA region to notify a pre-designated NWS office (per state or states). If acceptable to an FAA region, the appropriate NWS RH can arrange for completing accident notification via automated means, e.g., the FAA's Regional Automated Notification System (RANS), as available.

Regardless of any notification arrangement in place, if the NWS office receiving notification from the FAA is NOT the office responsible for issuing the notification report, the receiving NWS office is responsible for passing the information on to the appropriate NWS office as soon as possible.

Formal accidents, as defined by the FAA, fall within one of the following categories:

- a. Air carrier accident,
- b. All accidents causing serious injury or fatality when the flight was operating on an Instrument Flight Rules plan or Special Visual Flight Rules plan,
- c. Any accident wherein it is suspected that the FAA's air traffic operations are involved, or
- d. Any accident involving adverse weather when the flight crew was weather-briefed by FAA personnel.

FAA Form 8020-3, "Facility Accident Notification Record," lists the phone numbers of the parties and offices to be notified. The appropriate NWS RH should periodically contact their

FAA counterparts to ensure the telephone numbers are current. The air traffic field facility involved may be an Air Traffic Control Tower, an Air Route Traffic Control Center, an Automated Flight Service Station, or a Regional Communications Control Center, depending on the circumstances surrounding the accident/incident. The FAA facility report will include the following information (when available):

- a. Flight identification (name of airline, pilot, aircraft type, civil registration number);
- b. Location, date, and time of accident; brief description of what happened, including number on board and fatalities;
- c. Source or originator of the report; and
- d. Whether a weather briefing was furnished (and by what office).

4.3.2 Selection and type of Notification Report and Content. Aviation Accident notification reports from a regional office or AAWU to NWS Headquarters should be in the For the Record (FTR) format shown in Appendix A. Notification reports issued by WFOs to a regional office may be transmitted using either the FTR format, or, if it exists within AWIPS, the old OAV format. In turn, the regional office should transmit an FTR through the significant event email list (nws.sig.ops@noaa.gov). If the OAV format is selected, issuing offices should include, if known, all items listed in the FTR format. Do **not** include any conjectures or opinions as to the cause of the accident. If information on an item is unknown or not available, indicate "UNKN" or "N/A," as applicable. The notification report will express all times, including observation times, in Coordinated Universal Time (UTC). The description of the event should be as concise as possible, while still conveying what happened. The author of the report should avoid sensational or graphically descriptive terms regarding the manner of death or extent of injuries.

4.4 Notification Report (Marine). WFOs should submit an FTR report to their regional office anytime the office becomes aware of a major marine accident in the WFO's forecast area of responsibility. In turn, the regional office should transmit the FTR through the significant event email list (nws.sig.ops@noaa.gov). Any other NWS office, such as an NCEP center, should use the significant events email list (nws.sig.ops@noaa.gov) directly. A NWS office should also submit an FTR report to their regional office anytime the office becomes aware of a missing marine vessel where weather and/or wave conditions are suspected to be a factor or when it appears the criteria for major marine accident classification may be met when the fate of the vessel is determined. FTRs for marine incidents should follow the format listed in Appendix B. The event should be factual, and without graphic or sensational language.

5. Protection of Records. NWS offices will take the following steps to safeguard weather records in the event of a major accident within its county warning area:

- a. Secure all pertinent service records and other work products issued by the NWS office as soon as possible. Follow the guidance in NWSI 10-2003 Records Retention to determine which records to secure.

b. Unless specifically requested by NWSH or RH, keep the service records and work products in the NWS office for at least 14 days from date of issuance to provide time to assess:

- (1) To what extent weather is a factor, and
- (2) What weather information is required for investigation purposes.

c. In the absence of a request from NWSH for weather information, process all records in accordance with normal disposition procedures using the guidance in NWSI 1-803 and NWSI 10-2003.

Appendix A: Aviation Format for a For the Record (FTR) Memorandum

Date

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Record

FROM: Preparer's name and title

SUBJECT: Aircraft Accident, Location, Date

EVENT: Accident Information. Include all known and relevant information pertaining to the event, including (to the extent possible) such information about the circumstances of the accident (i.e. ground-looped on landing in cross-wind) that helps define the event. If known include aircraft type, aircraft identification, and incident time. The pilot's name is relevant in high profile events, but otherwise can be optional information here.

OFFICE: WFO and CWSU if appropriate

DEATHS: Number

INJURIES: Number

OBSERVATION: Include the nearest observations site and choose surface observation prior to and subsequent to the time of the accident. If available, the FTR may include several 5-minute ASOS observations on either side of the accident time.

TAF: Complete TAFs of all pertinent TAFs issued for 5 hours preceding the time of the accident

IN FLIGHT ADVISORIES: AIRMET # and condition (e.g. AIRMET – WA5: TURB, ICE)
SIGMET # (e.g. SIGMET 33C)
CWA # (e.g. ZLC CWA 303)

UPPER AIR OR WINDS ALOFT: Include pertinent information as it applies to the incident. The data may be from soundings, aircraft data (if used in TAF), or guidance products for winds at altitude; identify data source whenever this upper air data is provided in the report. For example a low level wind shear event would need this type of data.

COMMENTS: High-profile passengers, if any, should be mentioned to help NWSH determine the best routing for the report. Any additional

details about the weather or weather service that could be useful would also go here. Do not add comments just to fill space.

SYSTEMS: Note any equipment problems

Disclaimer

Any times listed pertaining to event occurrences and lead times associated with outlooks, watches and warnings are based on the best information available at the time this preliminary report was prepared. Subsequently, these data may be changed as time permits a more thorough investigation of the circumstances surrounding this event.

Appendix B: Marine Format for a For the Record Memorandum

Date

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Record

FROM: Preparer's name and title

SUBJECT: Marine Accident, General Location, and Date

EVENT: Accident Information. Include all known and relevant information pertaining to the event, including (to the extent possible) type and size (length) of vessel, number of people aboard, and specific location (if known; latitude/longitude or direction/distance to well-known geographical reference point; coastal, offshore, or high seas). Additionally, provide any other supporting information (e.g. charter, cargo, etc).

OFFICE: WFO or NCEP Service Center as appropriate

DEATHS: Number

INJURIES: Number

OBSERVATION: Provide most recent marine observations, as near to the event as possible, especially wind, wave, and significant weather data. Clearly identify buoy sites/locations using recognized identifiers.

FORECAST: Provide coastal waters, off shore or high seas forecasts at time of the event for appropriate marine zone(s).

ADVISORIES: List any marine advisories/warnings in effect at or near the time of the event. List any advisories/warnings lead times to event.

COMMENTS:

SYSTEMS: Note any equipment problems

Disclaimer

Any times listed pertaining to event occurrences and lead times associated with outlooks, watches and warnings are based on the best information available at the time this preliminary report was prepared. Subsequently, these data may be changed as time permits a more thorough investigation of the circumstances surrounding this event.