

NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE POLICY DIRECTIVE 10-20
September 23, 2010

Operations and Services

FORENSIC SERVICES

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OPR: W/OS23 (C. Abelman)

Certified by: W/OS (D. Caldwell)

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SUMMARY OF REVISIONS: This directive supersedes NWS Policy Directive 10-20, dated August 30 2004. Changes include: use of updated policy directive template, corrected grammar, removed duplicated material, and updated OPR.

//Signed//

September 9, 2010

John L. Hayes

Date

Assistant Administrator for Weather Services

1. This policy directive governs National Weather Service (NWS) activities supporting weather-related accident investigations and litigation. Weather is a factor in a substantial number of transportation-related accidents. These accidents are routinely investigated by Government agencies having legal responsibility to determine probable cause and make safety recommendations. The Government may become a party in litigation arising from transportation accidents.
2. The objective of NWS Forensic Services is to provide effective and timely weather support to Government agencies and offices involved in accident investigation and litigation, and provide dependable and timely weather documentation services in response to mission information requests.
3. This directive establishes the following authorities and responsibilities:
 - 3.1 NWS Forensic Services will ensure the program is consistent with the NWS mission and Department of Commerce and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) policy.
 - 3.2 The Office of Climate, Water, and Weather Services (OCWWS) is responsible for the overall management of Forensic Services. This includes:
 - a. Preparation and issuance of procedural instructions implementing this policy directive as determined by the Director, Office of Climate, Water, and Weather Services.
 - b. Maintaining an awareness of all investigative and legal activity concerning weather related aviation and marine accidents.
 - c. Maintaining an efficient and timely accident notification process within the NWS.
 - d. Assisting and participating in weather-related transportation accident investigations conducted by the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) and other Government accident investigation offices.
 - e. Assistance and technical advice for Government attorneys in legal cases arising from weather-related accidents.
 - f. Assisting in the preparation of NWS employees required to testify at Public Hearings convened by the NTSB, Federal Aviation Administration, or Coast Guard; and at legal proceedings (e.g., deposition or trial) arising from transportation accidents.
 - g. Working with the appropriate NOAA offices to ensure the maintenance of a weather records retention system which meets the needs of the accident investigation/legal community.
 - h. Responding to legal production, Freedom of Information Act, and mission information requests for weather records requested by Government attorneys and

accident investigation offices; and by private attorneys, consultants, and the general public arising from transportation accidents.

- 3.3 NWS Regional Headquarters will provide the required assistance, cooperation, and resources to effectively discharge the accident investigation/litigation support responsibilities as detailed in section 3.2.
4. The NWS assesses user satisfaction with weather documentation services as a measure of the Forensic Program effectiveness.