Interagency Council on Advancing Meteorological Services (ICAMS) FAQs

Last Update: 23 October 2020

Background on ICAMS

Q1. What is ICAMS?

A1. ICAMS is the Interagency Council on Advancing Meteorological Services. It is the formal mechanism by which all relevant Federal departments and agencies coordinate implementation of policy and practices to ensure U.S. global leadership in the meteorological services enterprise.

Q2. Why was ICAMS created?

A2. In April of 2017, the President signed into law the *Weather Research and Forecasting Innovation Act* (Public Law No. 115-25, Title IV, sec. 402, 15 U.S.C. § 8542). The Act required the Director of The White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) to establish an Interagency Committee for Advancing Weather Services – ICAMS meets this requirement. As indicated in the Act, ICAMS will serve "to improve coordination of relevant weather research and forecast innovation activities across the Federal Government."

Q3. When was ICAMS created?

A3. OSTP and NOAA signed the ICAMS Charter on July 31, 2020. This followed a year of planning and robust engagement with more than 50 leaders across relevant Federal departments and agencies.

Q4. What is the main goal for ICAMS?

A4. In addition to its statutory responsibility (see A1 and A3), ICAMS will foster collaboration on meteorological services to ensure "The United States will lead the world in meteorological services via an Earth system approach, providing societal benefits with information spanning local weather to global climate."

Q5. What are "meteorological services" and how do they relate to operational weather services?

A5. The Charter states: "Consistent with the World Meteorological Organization, 'meteorological services' reflect an Earth system approach and encompass weather, climate, hydrological, ocean, and related environmental services. The term 'services' broadly includes all relevant activities that provide value to society whether over land, at sea or in the air, including for the protection of life and property, personal and public health, quality of life, sustainability of the natural world, and economic and national security." ICAMS aspires to provide "societal benefits with information spanning local weather to global climate."

Q6. What is an "Earth system" approach?

A6. As summarized by the World Meteorological Organization, an "'Earth system' approach looks at the planet as a whole, linking the atmosphere, the ocean and hydrosphere, the terrestrial realm, the cryosphere and even the biosphere." The goal of this approach is to break down barriers between disciplines and research fields to a more integrated approach to better connect science with services and policymaking.

ICAMS Organization and Structure

Q7. How is ICAMS organized?

A7. ICAMS is a multi-agency Executive Branch activity. The Interagency Meteorological Coordination Office (IMCO) will serve as the administrative organization for ICAMS. ICAMS consists of four major committees:
(1) Observational Systems
(2) Cyber, Facilities and Infrastructure
(3) Services
(4) Research and Innovation

Q8. What is the leadership structure for ICAMS?

A8. The ICAMS Co-chairs are the OSTP Director and the NOAA Undersecretary for Oceans and Atmosphere, who also serves as the Federal Coordinator for Meteorology. One senior agency executive from each ICAMS agency serves on the Council as its ICAMS Principal. The co-chairs and members of the four ICAMS committees comprise senior staff from ICAMS agencies. The committee co-chairs rotate among the participating agencies.

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Q9. What is the function of the IMCO and what is its structure?

A9. The IMCO provides executive, administrative, logistical, and other support under the guidance of ICAMS to ensure the most effective coordination of all ICAMS activities in accordance with the authorizing legislation. An Executive Director and Deputy Director will lead the IMCO; these positions will rotate among the ICAMS agencies.

Q10. Will ICAMS set policies for Federal agencies and departments?

A10. No. Through its committees, ICAMS facilitates coordination for the implementation of relevant policies and practices across agencies. Additionally, ICAMS fosters engagement with other Federal coordination organizations such as the NSTC to meet the goals articulated by the Council.

Q11. Which existing meteorological coordinating organizations will ICAMS incorporate and replace?

A11. The following changes will occur in the transition to ICAMS:

(1) ICAMS incorporates the activities and responsibilities of the Federal Coordinating Committee for Meteorological Services and Supporting Research (FCMSSR) and Interdepartmental Committee for Meteorological Services and Supporting Research (ICMSSR). These organizations have been deactivated as separate entities.

(2) The ICAMS Interagency Meteorological Coordination Office (IMCO) incorporates the activities and responsibilities of the Office of the Federal Coordinator for Meteorology (OFCM). The IMCO is the administrative "front office" of ICAMS and will continue to carry out the legally mandated functions of the OFCM.

(3) ICAMS incorporates the activities and responsibilities of the National Earth System Prediction Capability (ESPC), which has been deactivated as a separate entity.

Q12. How will the transition of existing committees and other groups to the ICAMS structure take place? Will all coordination entities be moved under ICAMS?

A12. Activities within the previous FCMSSR/ICMSSR framework (e.g., committees, working groups, task forces, etc.) are being migrated into the new ICAMS four-committee structure. The ICAMS Principals and/or committee co-chairs may create new entities or consolidate existing ones as deemed necessary."

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ICAMS and the Community

Q13. How does ICAMS provide an advantage compared to the past?

A13. The new structure simplifies and improves coordination by joining together previously separated activities (e.g., multiple activities in observations) and creates a streamlined framework for more effective collaboration with external groups, and greater awareness by all stakeholders.

Q14. How will ICAMS activities be communicated and informed?

A14. ICAMS will utilize various established mechanisms and robust engagement with governmental and non-governmental stakeholders to communicate and coordinate with the broader meteorological enterprise its progress and receive input regarding future directions.