

NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE INSTRUCTION 10-2003

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Operations and Services

Forensic Services, NWSPD 10-20

NWS OPERATIONAL PRODUCTS 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, “Records Retention” dated November 26, 2019. Changes made in this update include:

- Updated the Instruction name to indicate records retention of operational products only. Administrative records management is provided in [NWS Directive Series \(NDS\) 1-8 - Records Management](#).
- Reformatted the entire document for better flow. This includes providing examples of products automatically archived through AWIPS and the NOAAPort NWS Telecommunications Gateway (NWSTG) versus those products that will need additional records management attention as they are created and disseminated outside the NWSTG.
- Removed old Office of the Federal Coordinating Meteorologist (OFCM) links from the WSR-88D section. The OFCM transitioned to the Interagency Council for the Advancement of Meteorological Services (ICAMS) in December 2021 and the links have not been updated from that transition.
- Updated Section 3.1 Aviation for better clarity.
- Created a new section on Impact-based Decision Support Services (IDSS) products (Section 3.3).
- Added Section 4 on proper records disposition.

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NWS Operational Products Records Retention

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1 Overview

National Weather Service (NWS) records are retained and disposed of in accordance with the Department of Commerce (DOC) Records Management policy, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Records Disposition Handbook instructions and schedules, and this policy instruction. This instruction details policy requirements for the retention of NWS operational products only - i.e., those products issued by NWS offices for the provision of forecasts, observations, Impact-based Decision Support Services (IDSS), and messaging of weather, water, and climate events. For administrative records management, please see the relevant policy and instructions under [NWS Directives System \(NDS\) 1-8 Records Management](#).

2 Service Product Retention

The National Environmental Satellite, Data, and Information Service (NESDIS) National Center for Environmental Information (NCEI) performs records retention functions for many NWS operational products. It serves legally as the custodian of record for these products. Service Level Agreements (SLA) between NCEI and NWS detail the scope and retention of these products to meet the minimum service records retention requirement as outlined in [NOAA Records Schedule 1300](#). For service products outside of the NCEI/NWS SLAs, the NWS becomes the custodian of record and must ensure that all NWS records are managed, archived, and disposed of according to NOAA Records Schedules. Each NWS office should be able to retrieve and print hard copies of their computer-generated forecast products within 14 days of issuance. [Section 3](#) details many of these types of operational products

Operational products known to be archived at NCEI include but are not limited to:

- Analysis and Forecast Products that are transmitted through the NOAAPort NWSTG;
- Forecast databases such as:

- The National Digital Forecast Database (NDFD) and the National Digital Guidance Database (NDGD).
- NWS, FAA, or DOD Observations Transmitted through NOAAPort
 - This includes but is not limited to surface observations (including Automated Surface Observing System (ASOS) and Automated Weather Observing System (AWOS), automated Marine Buoys and the Coastal Marine Automated Network (C-MAN)), pilot reports (PIREPS), and upper air and marine observations;
- Weather Surveillance Radar (WSR-88D) Data.

3 Miscellaneous Product Records Retention

Miscellaneous product records commonly required in accident investigations/litigation, other documentation support activities, and related retention requirements are listed below. Per [NOAA Record Schedule 1301-14B](#), for all miscellaneous records not transmitted through the Advanced Weather Interactive Processing System (AWIPS), National Centers AWIPS (NAWIPS), or NOAAPort NWS Telecommunications Gateway (NWSTG), files are to be broken into six (6) month groups and retained for five (5) years from the last date at which time the files can be destroyed unless otherwise indicated.

3.1 Aviation

NWS Meteorologists providing IDSS to Air Traffic Management (e.g., meteorologists at the Aviation Weather Center (AWC), Center Weather Service Units (CWSU), Meteorological Watch Offices (MWO), the Alaska Aviation Weather Unit (AAWU)) will retain locally produced products (text, graphical and digital), video briefings, and daily facility activity logs for five (5) years, either at the local office or at the NWS office that provides administrative responsibility for that unit. These records should be available for retrieval at the local office for at least the first thirty (30) days.

3.2 Fire Weather

Any fire weather forecasts, warnings, and advisories not entered into AWIPS will be retained at the originating office or program for five (5) years. Examples of these include but are not limited to:

- Incident Meteorologist (IMET) products, and
- Spot forecast products issued directly to the user.

3.3 Impact-Based Decision Support Services (IDSS) Products and Other Online Content

Any IDSS products and other online content generated outside of AWIPS will be retained at the originating office for five (5) years. Examples of these include but are not limited to:

- IDSS Packets,
- Slide deck briefings used by deployed personnel for on-site briefings,
- Weather Stories,

- Graphiccasts,
- Social media content, and
- Unique local web content.

3.4 Station Duty Manual (SDM)

NWS offices will retain SDM files containing all superseded and/or canceled operational instructions for a minimum of five (5) 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 NWS SDMs.

4.0 Records Disposal

Disposing of NWS service records should be done carefully to protect privacy and comply with relevant laws and regulations. Before disposing of any records, it is crucial to identify and classify them according to the NOAA Records Schedules. Once records eligible for disposal are identified, complete the [NOAA Form \(NF\) 62-23 Records Destruction Request Form](#) and submit it to the Records Liaison Officer in the Office of the Chief Financial Officer (CFO2). NOTE: the NF 62-23 must be reviewed and signed by the NWS Records Liaison Officer **before** the disposal of any records.

For more information on records disposal, please see [NWSI 1-806](#) or visit the NOAA Office of the Chief Administrative Officer (OCAO) intranet page linked below:

<https://sites.google.com/noaa.gov/cao/cao-services-and-guidance/records-management-tools/records-disposal?authuser=0>¹

¹ This is an internal NOAA site. Only NOAA employees will be able to access.