

## **President Obama's 2013 Budget Plan Cuts Crucial Positions at Weather Forecast Offices, Jeopardizing the Lifesaving Mission of the National Weather Service**

(February 13, 2012) Less than nine months after commenting that Republican-led budget cuts "might compromise the National Weather Service," the President's 2013 budget proposal calls for damaging cuts to the NWS, including cuts to positions critical to emergency responses at weather forecast offices (WFO).

The cuts would decrease the number of information technology officers at weather forecast offices across the nation. Currently, each WFO is staffed with one local programmer/IT specialist (ITO) who is critical to NWS operations. During an emergency response, ITOs are crucial to the WFO's local ability to innovate immediate lifesaving products and services. Because ITOs are meteorologists with information technology skills, they are frequently used to cover shifts and assist WFOs during severe weather, in addition to their regular duties. Most WFOs are only fair weather staffed, meaning there are not enough meteorologists to cover shifts during severe weather outbreaks. The NWS service assessments on the historic 2011 tornados and the 2010 Nashville flood event commended offices for having ITOs on station during the event to help with weather and IT issues.

"The ITO position is crucial to the lifesaving work of weather forecast offices," said NWSEO President Dan Sobien. "These are the guys who ensure our technology is working and our forecasts are accurate. Without an ITO on site, responses will be slower and lives will be lost during extreme weather events. This is an alarming move backwards when it comes to protecting the public."

Additional 2013 budget cuts propose eliminating research on improving hurricane intensity forecasts and the air quality forecasts. "Seriously, with all of the money government wastes, are we going to cut the people who are integral to the tornado warning process?" asked Sobien. "I think if the federal government can afford \$39 million for the Blue Angels and \$325 million for marching bands, it can afford \$15 million to provide its citizens warnings of severe weather. It may not be this year or next, but if these cuts go through, the nation will see another Katrina-like event, and it could have been entirely preventable."

The President's FY 2013 budget calls for a reduction of \$39 million in funding for NWS operations.

-NWSEO-

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