MEMORANDUM FOR: Distribution

FROM: Gregory Mandt
Director, Office of Climate, Water, and Weather Services

SUBJECT: Implementation of Station Checklist

In early 2001, a project was undertaken by the four CONUS regions to develop a national evaluation form for field offices. This task was one of several projects stemming from an inspection at WFO Raleigh by the Office of the Inspector General. We had planned to add the checklist to WSOM Chapter A-63 as an OML. However, with conversion to the new NWS Directives System, OMLs are no longer issued.

In order to eliminate the delay involved in reformatting Chapter A-63, please implement the checklist immediately. This memorandum shall serve as interim procedures until the new directive is issued.

Attachments

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Evaluation of Field Office Operations by Regional Headquarters Recommended Procedures

I. Introduction

National Weather Service (NWS) Regional Headquarters (RHs) are responsible for the oversight of field office operations (reference Weather Service Operations Manual (WSOM) A-63). To assist in accomplishing this task, RHs personnel conduct field office visits or field office program reviews. Recommendations from recent Office of Inspector General (OIG) inspections of NWS field offices stated RHs visits were too narrow in focus and should be expanded. A team was developed to address the OIG's recommendation.

II. Team Charge

Develop the minimum requirements for a Regional Headquarters inspection procedure that reviews field office operational integrity, including compliance with policies, internal controls, information technology, facilities, and human and other resource management. The procedure should be designed so if a Regional Headquarters cannot visit all offices on an annual basis, the offices not visited can conduct an annual self-evaluation and submit the evaluation to Regional Headquarters for review.

III. Team Members

Mickey Brown, Eastern Region
Mac McLaughlin, Southern Region
William Parker, Central Region
Robert Tibi, Western Region

IV. Recommendations

1) **RHs should use a checklist to facilitate field office evaluations.** WSOM A-63 states, "Specific checklists and/or guidelines for narrative reports should be developed by the regions." Eastern Region Headquarters uses an "Office Evaluation Form" to review office operations. Western Region Headquarters used a "WFO Worksheet" to conduct program reviews. The team adopted, modified, and added to Eastern and Western Region's forms to developed a "Field Office Evaluation Checklist." The checklist addresses field office operational integrity, including compliance with policies, internal controls, information technology, facilities, and human and other resource management (Attachment 2). The questions listed on the checklist are considered the minimum necessary to evaluate field office operations. RHs are encouraged to add to the checklist.

2) **RHs should conduct formal on-site field office evaluations on a 3 to 4 year cycle.** On-site evaluations provide RHs personnel an opportunity to observe office operations, verify answers to questions on the "Field Office Evaluation Checklist," and interact with office personnel. Interaction with field personnel helps to ascertain office morale. The team developed a process for on-site field office evaluations (Attachment 3).

3) **Field offices should conduct an annual self-evaluation.** The "Field Office Evaluation Checklist" was designed to allow field offices conduct a self-evaluation. The team developed a procedure RHs can use to facilitate self-evaluations (Attachment 4).

4) **RHs should exchange recurring findings and recommendations resulting from field office evaluations on an annual basis.**

Attachment 2

FIELD OFFICE EVALUATION CHECKLIST

Purpose: The “Field Office Evaluation Checklist” is designed to help you and your Regional Headquarters evaluate your office’s operational integrity, including compliance with policies, internal controls, information technology, facilities, and human and other resource management.

Instructions: This checklist covers all aspects of your office’s operation. The checklist is in WordPerfect format. The checklist is in table form, with three columns: Column 1 - Evaluation Criteria/Questions, Column 2 - Y/N/NA , Column 3 - If No, Please Explain/Required Explanations. Column 1 is composed of questions requiring “Yes/No” answers or an explanation of how your office performs particular tasks. Indicate your answer to “Yes/No” questions in column 2. Any “No” response requires an explanation in column 3. If the question does not apply to your operation, please include N/A in column 2. Please use column 3 for responses to “how” questions or other responses requiring explanation.

This checklist was designed to be used in electronic form. Please type responses directly into columns 2 and 3 using WordPerfect. Please type the name of your office and the date you completed the checklist in the space provide at the top of page one. After you have completed the checklist, please send the file using e-mail to the appropriate Regional Headquarters point of contact.

EVALUATION CRITERIA/QUESTIONS	Y/ N/ NA	IF NO, PLEASE EXPLAIN/ REQUIRED EXPLANATIONS
I. OFFICE OVERVIEW		
1. Does the office have an Office In-Brief Presentation?		
II. FORECAST OPERATIONS		
A. STATION DUTY MANUALS (SDMs)		
1. Are SDMs organized in accordance with WSOM A-13?		
2. Are SDMs located in the operations area?		
3. Is an electronic copy of the routine SDM available? When was it last updated?		
4. Is there a separate emergency SDM?		
a. Does it have an equipment failure section?		
b. Are maintenance priorities clearly delineated?		
c. Is there a back-up operations section for:		
i. Power/equipment failures?		
ii. Communications failures?		
iii. Service back-up for other offices?		
d. Has current reference material for back-up operations been exchanged with surrounding offices?		
5. Is the Regional Network emergency service phone number present in the SDM?		
6. Are appropriate Regional Headquarters emergency/severe weather notification procedures listed in the SDM?		
7. Do your operational area computers have the Regional ROML homepage link book marked?		
8. Do you have a routine operations SDM?		

EVALUATION CRITERIA/QUESTIONS	Y/ N/ NA	IF NO, PLEASE EXPLAIN/ REQUIRED EXPLANATIONS
9. Have all operational staff signed off on the annual SDM review sheet within the past year?		
10. Are SDM pages dated and current?		
11. Are superseded SDM pages retained for five years?		
12. Are there written instructions outlining the local policy regarding routine forecast and severe weather coordination in the SDM?		
13. Is the Regional policy for forecast coordination outlined in the SDM?		
14. Does the office have instructions on initiating Blast-Up conference calls in the SDM along with a listing of their coordination call lists?		
B. WSOM/OML/ROMLS		
1. Are WSOMs/OMLs/ROMLs up-to-date?		
2. Are superseded WSOM/OML/ROML pages retained for five years?		
3. Please describe the mechanism used in your office to ensure all staff have reviewed new WSOMs/OMLs/ROMLs.		
4. Are Engineering Handbooks (EHBs) up-to-date?		
5. Are EHBs readily accessible to the staff?		
C. SHIFT LOGS		
1. Are shift logs generated for each operational shift?		
2. Are shift logs archived?		
3. Is an equipment status board maintained in the operations area?		
D. WARNING CHECKLISTS		
1. Does the office maintain and use a succinct short-fused warning checklist?		

EVALUATION CRITERIA/QUESTIONS	Y/ N/ NA	IF NO, PLEASE EXPLAIN/ REQUIRED EXPLANATIONS
2. Does the office maintain and use a succinct long-fused warning checklist?		
3. Does the office maintain any other operational checklists? If so, please list.		
4. Are copies of the checklists readily available within the operations area?		
E. REAL-TIME PRODUCT QUALITY CONTROL		
1. Are all products routinely spell checked and proofread before transmission?		
G. ON-STATION DRILLS		
1. List all on-station drills performed during the past year.		
2. When was the last EMRS refresher training conducted?		
H. OFFICE SPOTTER PROGRAM		
1. Is the spotter manual up-to-date?		
2. Are maps included?		
3. Are spotter contact numbers readily accessible in the operations area?		
I. NOAA WEATHER RADIO (NWR) OPERATIONS		
1. Are SAME alert instructions plainly visible?		
2. Do these instructions include color coded maps relating SAME buttons to geographic areas?		
3. Is a table of SAME alerted products visible?		
4. Are the NWR tone and SAME features tested weekly?		
5. Are all transmitters within your CWA equipped with ROAMS units to detect NWR outages?		
6. In the event of an NWR failure, what procedures do you have in place to alert EAS sites?		

EVALUATION CRITERIA/QUESTIONS	**Y/ N/ NA**	**IF NO, PLEASE EXPLAIN/ REQUIRED EXPLANATIONS**
7. Is there a listing of LP1 and LP2 EAS entry points and their phone numbers in the operations area?		
J. AWIPS		
1. Is the phone number for NCF easily accessible in the operations area?		
K. OTHER		
1. Are NAWAS warning (not tests) contacts logged?		
2. Is the NAWAS repair number easily accessible in the operations area?		
3. Does the office have a set of climate records to support all operational programs - public, aviation, marine, etc. (as appropriate)?		
4. Does the office have an archive of its MOAs/MOUs?		
5. Is the emergency generator tested weekly?		
6. Does the office have up-to-date E-19's for all forecast points in the service area?		
7. RFCs Only - Does the office have a policy to extend hours of operation beyond normal operating hours?		
8. RFCs Only - Does the office have established HAS coordination procedures with appropriate WFOs, adjacent RFCs, NCEP, and external customers?		
III. OPERATIONAL PROGRAM & SERVICES EVALUATION PLAN		
1. Does the office have a plan that evaluates products and services? If so, what program areas does it cover?		

EVALUATION CRITERIA/QUESTIONS	Y/ N/ NA	IF NO, PLEASE EXPLAIN/ REQUIRED EXPLANATIONS
2. If not, what method(s) does the office use to: (a) ensure product and service quality is maintained/enhanced? (b) to track corrective actions and the implementation of improvements? (c) to document significant actives and service trends?		
3. If the office has a Center Weather Service Unit within its area of responsibility, when was the last formal evaluation conducted?		
4. If the office has a FAA Flight Service Facility within its area of responsibility, when was the last formal evaluation conducted?		
5. Does the office have a formal, documented QA/QC Program Plan?		
6. Does the office have an in-house verification procedure for specific program areas (e.g., hydrology, public forecasts, aviation, marine, severe weather)?		
7. How are QA/QC results and verification scores used to improve office forecasts and warnings?		
IV. SIGNIFICANT WEATHER EVENTS/FORECASTER PROFICIENCY		
A. REAL-TIME EVENT DOCUMENTATION		
1. Does the office report details of significant storm events promptly and in accordance with Regional policy?		
B. POST-EVENT DOCUMENTATION		
1. Are post-storm analyses conducted after significant weather events? If so, is the process formalized?		
C. FORECASTER PROFICIENCY		
1. Does the office have a structured training program? Is the program documented?		

EVALUATION CRITERIA/QUESTIONS	Y/ N/ NA	IF NO, PLEASE EXPLAIN/ REQUIRED EXPLANATIONS
2. Is there a forecaster reference file where local forecast studies, techniques, or analogues are maintained?		
V. CUSTOMER/PARTNER EDUCATION AND OUTREACH ACTIVITIES		
1. How does the office assess customer service on a routine basis? When was the last time this was accomplished?		
2. What actions does the office take to foster good relations with its customers and partners?		
VI. HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT		
A. COMMUNICATIONS		
1. How often does the office hold general staff meetings? (Include date of last meeting.)		
2. Does the staff provide agenda items for the meeting?		
3. Is a meeting agenda distributed prior to the meeting?		
4. Are meeting notes/minutes distributed to the staff?		
5. Who is on your office management team?		
6. List other methods used to communicate with the staff.		
7. How often does the office management team hold management meetings? (Include date of last management meeting.)		
8. Is a list of focal points and associated duties available to the staff? When was the list last updated?		
9. Is there a list of office teams and team members? When was the list last updated?		
10. Are employees encouraged to do work-related projects? How is this accomplished?		

EVALUATION CRITERIA/QUESTIONS	Y/ N/ NA	IF NO, PLEASE EXPLAIN/ REQUIRED EXPLANATIONS
B. PERSONNEL ISSUES		
1. Is the Regional Office aware of any performance and/or conduct problems in your office?		
2. Is the Regional Office involved in providing guidance, support, and/or proposed solutions to the problems?		
3. What do you do when you can not resolve a problem on-station?		
4. Do you have a formal orientation process for new employees?		
VII. LABOR/MANAGEMENT		
1. Do you meet with your local union steward as directed in Article 9, Section 4, of the Collective Bargaining Agreement?		
VIII. ADMINISTRATION		
1. Do all employees have performance plans?		
2. Does the MIC/HIC/DAPM/ESA discuss performance with employees at least twice per year?		
3. Does the office have a procedure in place to track property movements, transfers, acquisitions, disposal, or changes? Please describe the procedure.		
4. Are excess property items being identified and disposed of?		
5. Do all office laptop computers have hand receipts (NOAA Form 3740)?		
6. Are requests for leave and approved absences on file?		
7. Is proper documentation on file for all overtime and compensatory time worked?		
8. Are travel orders approved prior to travel?		

EVALUATION CRITERIA/QUESTIONS	Y/ N/ NA	IF NO, PLEASE EXPLAIN/ REQUIRED EXPLANATIONS
9. Do all employees have telephone calling cards?		
10. Do all employees have travel cards?		
11. Are the office’s vehicle mileage electronically submitted once per month?		
12. Are accident reporting forms located in the Government vehicle(s) or in the office?		
13. Are vehicle logs kept for all government vehicles?		
14. Does the office periodically analyze vehicle use to ensure:		
a) they are being used in an appropriate manner?		
b) there is a demonstrated need for the current number of official vehicles?		
15. When was the last time your office conducted an assessment for the need of for government vehicles?		
16. Have all purchase card holders read CAMS 1313.301 and signed the acknowledgment in Attachment A?		
17. When was the last time the need for purchase cards was reviewed?		
18. Do all purchase card holders maintain copies of their original credit card statements and purchase logs?		
19. Does the Approving Official have access to these files?		
IX. INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY		
A. GENERAL		
1. Are passwords on all office computers changed every six months? List date this was last done.		

EVALUATION CRITERIA/QUESTIONS	Y/ N/ NA	IF NO, PLEASE EXPLAIN/ REQUIRED EXPLANATIONS
2. Have all office personnel completed the on-line NOAA Computer Security Awareness Training Course? (http://www.csp.noaa.gov/noaarestricted/itsac/index.htm)		
3. Does the office have a designated Information Technology Security Officer (ITSO)? Please provide the name of the office ITSO.		
4. Does the ITSO review the office security logs? Please provide the date of the last review.		
5. Is the government warning banner displayed on all office computers (both Windows and Unix machines) in accordance with Public Law 99-74?		
6. Is the government warning banner displayed on Telnet, FTP, and XDM (GUI) logon screens?		
B. PERSONAL COMPUTERS (PCS)		
1. What version of Mcafee Virus Scanner is installed and running on all PCS?		
2. What version of the Mcafee Scan Engine is installed and running on all PCS?		
3. What version of the DAT file is installed and running on all PCS?		
4. Has the office implemented a scheduler that will update all PCS with the latest DAT file automatically at least once a week?		
C. BACKUPS		
1. How often is back-up run on your office server?		
2. Where are back-up tapes stored?		

EVALUATION CRITERIA/QUESTIONS	**Y/ N/ NA**	**IF NO, PLEASE EXPLAIN/ REQUIRED EXPLANATIONS**
X. OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH		
Use Checklists from EHB-15 to evaluate your office's compliance with NWS Occupational Safety and Health policies and procedures (http://www.oso3.nws.noaa.gov/safety/ehb-15.htm**).** Checklists can be downloaded directly from the enclosed web page.		

Attachment 3

Field Office On-Site Evaluations
Recommended Process

I. Overview - Field offices should receive an on-site evaluation by Regional Headquarters personnel every 3 to 4 years. An evaluation schedule will be developed at the beginning of every fiscal year and provided to field offices as soon as the schedule is finalized. The evaluation will be conducted by a team, with a minimum of two people, led by a Regional Headquarters employee. Regional Headquarters are encouraged to use subject matter experts from the field (e.g., WCMs, SOOs, DOHs, ESAs, DAPMs, SHs) as team members. A coordinator will be appointed to facilitate the on-site evaluation program.

II. On-Site Evaluation Process

1. The "Field Office Evaluation Checklist" will be completed before the team arrives on-site.

2. The evaluation will last up to five days.

3. Evaluation agenda:
   1. Begin with formal office overview from MIC/HIC:
      a) Office In-Brief will be presented to the team
      b) "Field Office Evaluation Checklist" presented to the team
   2. The evaluation team will evaluate all aspects of office operations. Evaluation teams are strongly encouraged to speak one-on-one with as many office personnel as possible. The team should make every effort to observe all shifts during their evaluation.
   3. Out briefing by the evaluation team.
      a) Team Leader will discuss findings with the MIC/HIC and agree on action items and due dates.

4) The Team Leader will submit a report to the Regional Coordinator within two weeks of completing the formal evaluation.

5) Upon completion of the report, the Team Leader will brief the Regional Director and Regional Headquarters Senior Management on findings and recommendations.

6) The Regional Coordinator will track findings and recommendations for completion.

7) Findings and recommendations should be made available to other offices to aid in their office evaluations efforts.

8) Recurring findings and recommendations should be shared with other Regions on an annual basis.

Field Office Self-Evaluations
Recommended Process

I. Overview - Field offices should receive an on-site evaluation by Regional Headquarters personnel every 3 to 4 years. Field offices will conduct a self-evaluation using the "Field Office Evaluation Checklist" each year between on-site evaluations.

II. Self-Evaluation Process

1) Each field office will submit a completed "Field Office Evaluation Checklist" to the Regional Coordinator no later than the second week of October.

2) The Regional Coordinator will review the checklist with subject matter experts in Regional Headquarters.

3) Findings and recommendations resulting from the review of the checklist will be discussed with the field office manager.

4) Within thirty days of the receipt of the checklist by Regional Headquarters, an action plan to address findings and recommendations will be presented to the Regional Director and Regional Headquarters Senior Management.

5) The Regional Coordinator will track recommendations for completion.

6) Findings and recommendations should be made available to other offices to aid in their office evaluations efforts.

7) Recurring findings and recommendations should be shared with other Regions on an annual basis.