

**NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE INSTRUCTION 10-1721**

**May 29, 2008**

**Operations and Services  
Dissemination NDS 10-17**

**INTERNATIONAL SATELLITE COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM (ISCS) SYSTEMS  
MANAGEMENT**

**NOTICE:** This publication is available at: <http://www.nws.noaa.gov/directives/>.

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**SUMMARY OF REVISIONS:** This instruction supersedes NWSI 10-1721, International Satellite Communication System (ISCS) Systems Management, dated April 25, 2006.

The following changes have been made:

1. An additional sentence was been added to the end of Section 2.2 to address backup/continuity of operations.
2. In Section 3.1.1 new bullet items (d) and (e) have been added for Information Technology security and data transmission management.
3. Section 3.1.3 has been created to address Office of the Chief Information Officer.
4. The final paragraph in Section 6 has been modified for clarity.

Signed by  
John McNulty, Jr.  
Director, Office of Operational Systems

May 15, 2008  
Date

**International Satellite Communications System (ISCS) Systems Management**

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1. Document Purpose. This procedure describes how the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) National Weather Service (NWS) as the functionary specified in an Inter-agency agreement with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) manages, operates and maintains the ISCS.

2. System Description. The ISCS is a satellite data distribution system operated by NWS. The system is part of an integrated global weather distribution network covering the Atlantic and Pacific World Meteorological Organization (WMO) regions. ISCS is composed of three major components; the data provider, the data delivery and acquisition system for data broadcast and collection, and the end processor.

2.1 System Purpose. The purpose of ISCS is to provide support to the WAFS and GTS.

2.1.1 ISCS support for WAFS. ISCS support for WAFS is in response to International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and WMO requirements. ISCS and the United Kingdom WAFS - Satellite Distribution System (SADIS) make up the worldwide WAFS program providing vital meteorological support for flight planning and air traffic management throughout the world. The purpose of ISCS/WAFS is to provide the worldwide aviation community with operational meteorological forecasts and information about meteorological phenomena required for flight planning and safe, economic and efficient air navigation. As a real-time, point to multi-point service, ISCS operates on a 24/7 basis. For those sites that have ISCS located at an airport, it functions as an additive component to the Aeronautical Fixed Telecommunication Network.

2.1.2 ISCS support for GTS. ISCS provides support for GTS service to Caribbean, Mexico and Central American nations [also known as WMO Region IV Meteorological Telecommunications Network (ISCS/RMTN)] as part of cooperative efforts between NWS and WMO to improve meteorological data and information dissemination within WMO Region IV. Additionally, RMTN allows for two-way exchange of meteorological information between the United States and nations of WMO Region IV (Caribbean Islands, Colombia, Mexico and Central America).

2.2 First Component - Data Provider. The Washington World Area Forecast Center (WAFC) communications facility and the GTS/Regional Telecommunications Hub (RTH) on the GTS/Main Telecommunications Network (MTN) are located together in Silver Spring, Maryland and jointly comprise the first component as data provider to the ISCS. This facility distributes grid products from connected producing facilities, builds and/or switches observational collectives, and distributes worded forecast messages from other communication centers on the multiple data streams of the ISCS. The data is transmitted using the Transmission Control Protocol /Internet Protocol (TCP/IP) from the Washington RTH/WAFC to the communications service provider satellite up-link facility. In the event of a catastrophic failure at, or evacuation of the facility in Silver Spring, Maryland, the NWS Backup Telecommunications Gateway in Mount Weather, Virginia, is activated to provide continuity of operations.

2.3 Second Component - Communications Service Provider. The delivery and acquisition system is a communications provider which uses satellite technology. The provider services are currently available under an openly competed contract between Verizon Business (formerly MCI) and NWS. The contracted satellite system uses Hughes Corporation up-link facilities located at Andover, Maine for utilization of a contracted space segment on the INTELSAT 903 over the Atlantic Ocean, and up-links at Yaocolt, Washington for utilization of the INTELSAT 701 and Fuchsstadt, Germany for utilization of INTELSAT 906 over the Pacific Ocean. The satellite broadcast uses a C-band (5-6 GHz) system. The Hughes very small aperture terminals (VSAT); 2.4 meter antenna, radio frequency electronics; and a network interface device make up the downlink equipment. All downlink equipment with exception of network interface equipment (and maintenance) is the responsibility of the owner/end-user. The components as indicated comprise the communications system and will be placed where users establish their service. The global area of potential reception of the three satellites covers two-thirds of the globe. SADIS (United Kingdom WAFS - Satellite Distribution System) covers the remaining one-third.

2.4 Third Component - Computer Processing System. A computer processing system (workstation or mini-computer) must be connected to the communications port of the network interface device. This computer system is selectable by the user, but the interface of the selected computer must be prepared to utilize Hughes Network Systems' Program Director (PD) Receiver software to enable reception of IP multicast data stream. The system can be a stand alone workstation as the third component of the ISCS. This component receives the data stream and stores the data for retrieval and use. Countries (or agencies within authorized countries) desiring connection to receive the ISCS satellite broadcast may select any workstation from the available commercial vendors. These vendors (located around the world) have built computer systems which must meet the functional requirements for an ISCS WAFS workstation. A partial list of

companies with WAFS ready computer systems is located on the internet at <http://www.met-office.gov.uk/sadis/about/manufacturers.html>.

3. Organizational Responsibilities. This section describes the responsibilities of the NWS WSH concerning ISCS.

3.1 Weather Service Headquarters. The Assistant Administrator (AA) for Weather Services has overall responsibility for ISCS project management and coordinates ISCS program administration with FAA, WMO, and ICAO management.

3.1.1 Office of Operational Systems. OPS provides staff assistance to the AA for Weather Services and the FAA for ISCS program management and configuration control. The Data Dissemination Branch (OPS17) provides direction, assistance, resources, and other support to the registered users of the ISCS broadcast and ISCS Memorandum of Understanding signatories, and has overall responsibility for the following:

- a. Program Management of the ISCS; including program and financial management and operational, engineering and communications;
- b. Management of the ISCS communications and system maintenance contracts; monitoring the maintenance and logistical support required;
- c. Engineering and technical support for ISCS, including programming consoles, telecommunications, and station components;
- d. IT Security for ISCS, including system Certification and Accreditation, in accordance with all applicable and relevant National Institute of Standards and Technology special publications and Federal Information Processing Standards, continuous monitoring, and incident response;
- e. ISCS/WAFS and ISCS/RMTN data transmission management, including establishing and maintaining the data product baselines and change management processes, and exercising authority to approve or deny data product change requests;
- f. Technical and system management liaison with ISCS stakeholders; including WSH, equipment manufacturers, other government agencies and user communities (foreign and domestic); and
- g. Outreach to government and private organizations (both foreign and domestic), individuals and the public regarding ISCS and its importance in support of free global aviation weather data and products dissemination required for flight planning and safe, economic, and efficient air navigation.

3.1.2 Office of Climate, Water and Weather Services. OS Aviation Services (OS23) is responsible for establishing policy regarding the broadcast program content of ISCS in accordance with NWS, WMO, and ICAO requirements.

3.1.3 Office of the Chief Information Officer. The NWS OCIO will serve as the Authorizing Official for the ISCS system security accreditation. As such, the OPS will provide the OCIO with the information necessary to determine the risk that the ISCS system will pose to agency operations, agency assets, or individuals throughout the ISCS system development lifecycle. The Chief of the Telecommunications Operations Center, within the OCIO, is responsible for the coordination of data requirements with other Member countries to ensure the successful exchange of meteorological information, and for maintaining the ISCS switching directories in compliance with the approved ISCS data products baseline.

4. Area of Coverage. ISCS broadcasts can usually be received on WAFS compliant systems and other computer systems as configured with WMO International Standard interface and data format capability. Current ISCS service area includes those regions covered by INTELSAT 903; Atlantic Ocean Region (North America, Central America, Caribbean Islands, South America, parts of Western Europe, and Western North Africa) and INTELSAT 701 (and 906); Pacific Ocean Region (Alaska, Western North America, Hawaii, New Zealand, Australia, Eastern Asia, Eastern Russia and the Pacific Islands of Australasia).

5. Weather Products and Information. The ISCS aviation weather broadcast format conforms to WMO and ICAO specific guidelines. Information that is broadcast to the aviation community is selected and prioritized based on the weather needs of the people in the service area and in accordance with the guidelines established.

6. Policy on ISCS Access. Access to the ISCS broadcast is free based on the user's purchase of a VSAT antenna, downlink, and registration with the NWS/WMO-ICAO representative.

Any country or entity with the desire/need to receive ISCS/WAFS data must do the following: (1) Submit a request through their respective ICAO State Representative to the WAFS Providing State Representative; request will then be processed through the NWS office of International Activities (W/IA). (2) Upon notification of approval, sign an End-User-License-Agreement (EULA) for the right to use the required PD Receive software. (3) As part of the pre-installation process provide point of contact information for the new ISCS/WAFS site to the W/IA and NWS ISCS Program Office (OPS17). All of the above actions must be completed before the site would be considered for any future changes/upgrades to the ISCS.