

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 5, 2025

Laura Grimm

Chief of Staff performing the duties of Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and
Atmosphere and NOAA Administrator
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
1401 Constitution Avenue NW, Room 5128
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Ms. Grimm,

As Members of Congress representing Southeast Texas, we write to express our concern regarding the staffing crisis at the National Weather Service (NWS) Houston/Galveston Forecast Office.

The NWS Houston/Galveston Forecast Office will soon lose all three members of its leadership staff. The Meteorologist in Charge, Warning Coordination Meteorologist, and the Science and Operations Officer have all either already departed or announced their plans to leave following the announcement of significant staffing reductions directed by President Trump and Elon Musk.

All three of the leadership roles in NWS regional forecast offices are vital to the overall operations of the office. The Meteorologist in Charge is the highest-ranking employee at the field office, responsible for oversight of all office operations. The Warning Coordination Meteorologist manages the office's outreach to the public and local media during extreme weather events. The Science and Operations Officer is the top researcher at the field office and is responsible for ensuring that the latest science and technology are employed to provide optimal service to the community.

Losing any one of these three positions for an extended period could mean that the NWS Houston/Galveston Forecast Office will be forced to limit its outreach to the community, including emergency managers, schools, and hospitals, and will not be able to implement the latest forecasting research or techniques. But losing all three of these essential employees will increase the risk of errors or missed extreme weather warnings and exacerbate an already overworked staff. NWS forecast office employees are working longer shifts because of the forced staffing reductions, which is leading to severe worker burnout. NWS staff provide a vital public service to the Southeast Texas community, and these employees and our communities deserve better.

Vacancies are currently as high as 20 to 40 percent in weather forecast offices across the country, with another agency-wide staff reduction of roughly 5 percent expected from the April 17, 2025 round of retirements and buyouts. The NWS Houston/Galveston Forecast Office currently has a 44 percent vacancy rate. This is extremely concerning ahead of an active hurricane season and as our region continues to recover from Hurricane Beryl.

For us to understand better the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) plan to ensure adequate staffing at the NWS Houston/Galveston Forecast Office, please answer the following questions:

1. What is the timeline for permanently filling the Meteorologist in Charge, Warning Coordination Meteorologist, and the Science and Operations Officer roles at the NWS Houston/Galveston Forecast Office?
2. What is the timeline for permanently filling the other open roles for a Port Meteorological Officer, Senior Meteorologists, Meteorologists, and Electronics Technicians at the NWS Houston/Galveston Forecast Office?
3. With hurricane season quickly approaching, how do you plan to ensure adequate staffing capacity at the NWS Houston/Galveston Forecast Office during extreme weather events?
4. Will the NWS Houston/Galveston Forecast Office be forced to adjust or degrade any of its services in response to reduced staffing? If so, what specific changes will occur?
5. If NWS employees from other regional offices provide temporary coverage for staff vacancies at the NWS Houston/Galveston Forecast Office, how will you protect the continuity of services in the offices where the temporary replacements originate?
6. In the event of multiple extreme weather events occurring across a region or across the country, how will you ensure that each office is adequately staffed to perform their responsibilities despite drastic staffing reductions?
7. How many NWS employees have departed from the agency since January 20, 2025?
8. How many NWS employees who departed from the agency since January 20, 2025 accepted voluntary separation benefits or early retirement offers related to staffing reductions directed by senior officials from NOAA, Department of Commerce, or the White House?
9. How many NWS employees who departed from the agency since January 20, 2025 were terminated based on their probationary status?
10. Did you create a plan to ensure continuity of operations at NWS forecasting offices before implementing significant staffing reductions since January 20, 2025? If so, what is it?

We request answers to these questions by May 30, 2025. Adequate staffing for the NWS, especially as we go into hurricane season, is a critical matter that could cost lives if left unaddressed. We look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,



Lizzie Fletcher
Member of Congress



Sylvia R. Garcia
Member of Congress



Al Green
Member of Congress