Loss of NOAA Jobs & Weather Forecasting

The National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) serves as an agency that helps prepare the public and serve as a "platform" to render reliable information to citizens, emergency managers, and decision makers. Utilizing high technical instrumentation and up-to-date new science, research, and resources – their mission is to understand the complex world and protect it by analyzing global weather and climate.

At the end of February 2025, approximately 880 NOAA jobs were cut in an effort to reduce the size of the federal government ordered by the Trump administration to cut costs. NOAA employs approximately 12,000 jobs so less than 10% were terminated from their positions. Additionally, another 1,000 may be laid off to shrink the NOAA staff by 20%.

It’s important to understand that the large majority of these employees were considered “probationary”; meaning their employment contracts began within the last 1-3 years and were relatively “new” in their roles. These roles were focused in several main divisions including academia, marine, biodiversity, climate, research, and planetary monitoring fields.

The National Weather Service (NWS) is a component of NOAA and serves one out of 6 total line offices under NOAA. It’s the NWS that is responsible for providing warnings and forecasts to the public serving as the primary source of weather. From gathering critical information from buoys, satellites, special weather balloons; this analysis is then converted through a few steps to ultimately obtain crucial weather data in the form of computer modeling to help make forecasts.

The Main Impact of Weather Forecasting & Cuts

The “million” dollar question is how will weather prediction and the ability to forecast events be impacted? Let’s dive into the main details of this all. According to CBS, an administration official stated that employees who were deemed as “critical” regarding their positions and responsibilities in the NWS were “largely spared”.

While still not completely confirmed in terms of quantity, a few hundred NWS employees were laid off that were categorized still as “probationary”. This does include meteorologists that serve as hurricane hunters, radar specialists, and employees working on numerical modeling trying to continue to improve the technology to advance the science.

Going back to the question, will weather forecasting be impacted in a negative way? The answer to this is not necessarily. Those employees that were considered essential still have their jobs, and many of those include gathering necessary data such as launching balloons and converting it through complicated equations that get “ingested” into computer modeling. Overall accuracy doesn’t take a substantial hit given that we’re still receiving important data to be utilized for forecasting purposes, and that’ll never really change because it’s to important. It’s a matter of whether we’ll ever receive more funding to advance computer technology to upgrade computer modeling, which will unfortunately take a “back seat” for the time-being.

This is where the private sector weather companies play a crucial role for the public by offering their paid services. While the NWS serves to protect the public and prioritize safety, vacancies at these 122 NWS offices ultimately plays an “over branching” role in the lack of warnings that could be sent out like in the case of tornadoes, flash flood emergencies, or snow squall warnings to name a few. The private sector specializes in regional or local forecasts serving individuals with tailor-made forecasts and products unique to their company by design.

So, while you may ask if forecast accuracy will decline, it necessarily won’t as long as we’re still collecting vital atmospheric data thanks to the NWS. Those weather apps will continue to display percentages of precipitation or give temperature forecasts. Private sector meteorologists and forecasters will continue to provide their most accurate predictions for clients as long as the data continues to be rendered. While efforts to continuously improve our computer modeling will be hampered, we’ll still have necessary data to at least predict weather.