

AMENDMENT NO. \_\_\_\_\_ Calendar No. \_\_\_\_\_

Purpose: In the nature of a substitute.

**IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES—114th Cong., 1st Sess.**

**S. 1573**

To improve communication from the National Weather Service regarding severe weather risks, and for other purposes.

Referred to the Committee on \_\_\_\_\_ and  
ordered to be printed

Ordered to lie on the table and to be printed

AMENDMENT IN THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTE intended  
to be proposed by Mr. THUNE (for himself and Mr. SCHATZ)

Viz:

1 Strike all after the enacting clause and insert the fol-  
2 lowing:

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Weather Alerts for  
5 a Ready Nation Act of 2015”.

6 **SEC. 2. WARNING COORDINATION METEOROLOGISTS AT**

7 **WEATHER FORECAST OFFICES OF NATIONAL**

8 **WEATHER SERVICE.**

9 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Director of the National  
10 Weather Service shall employ at least 1 warning coordina-

1 tion meteorologist at each weather forecast office of the  
2 National Weather Service.

3 (b) RESPONSIBILITIES.—Each warning coordination  
4 meteorologist employed under subsection (a) shall—

5 (1) be responsible for providing service to the  
6 geographic area of responsibility covered by the  
7 weather forecast office at which the warning coordi-  
8 nation meteorologist is employed to help ensure that  
9 users of products of the National Weather Service  
10 can respond effectively to improve outcomes from  
11 weather events;

12 (2) liaise with users of products and services of  
13 the National Weather Service, such as the public,  
14 media outlets, users in the aviation, marine, and ag-  
15 ricultural communities, and forestry, land, and water  
16 management interests, to evaluate the adequacy and  
17 usefulness of the products and services of the Na-  
18 tional Weather Service;

19 (3) collaborate with such regional weather fore-  
20 cast offices and State, local, and tribal government  
21 agencies as the Director considers appropriate in de-  
22 veloping, proposing, and implementing plans to de-  
23 velop, modify, or tailor products and services of the  
24 National Weather Service to improve the usefulness  
25 of such products and services;

1           (4) ensure the maintenance and accuracy of se-  
2       vere weather call lists, appropriate office severe  
3       weather policy or procedures, and other severe  
4       weather or dissemination methodologies or strate-  
5       gies; and

6           (5) work closely with State, local, and tribal  
7       emergency management agencies, and other agencies  
8       related to disaster management, to ensure a  
9       planned, coordinated, and effective preparedness ef-  
10      fort.

11       (c) **ADDITIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES.**—A warning co-  
12      ordination meteorologist employed under subsection (a)  
13      may—

14           (1) work with a State agency to develop plans  
15       for promoting more effective use of products and  
16       services of the National Weather Service throughout  
17       the State;

18           (2) identify priority community preparedness  
19       objectives;

20           (3) develop plans to meet the objectives identi-  
21       fied in paragraph (2); and

22           (4) conduct severe weather event preparedness  
23       planning and citizen education efforts with and  
24       through various State, local, and tribal government

1 agencies and other disaster management-related or-  
2 ganizations.

3 (d) PLACEMENT WITH STATE AND LOCAL EMER-  
4 GENCY MANAGERS.—

5 (1) IN GENERAL.—In carrying out this section,  
6 the Director may place a warning coordination mete-  
7 orologist employed under subsection (a) with a State  
8 or local emergency manager if the Director considers  
9 doing so is necessary or convenient to carry out this  
10 section.

11 (2) TREATMENT.—If the Director determines  
12 that the placement of a warning coordination mete-  
13 orologist placed with a State or local emergency  
14 manager under paragraph (1) is near a weather  
15 forecast office of the National Weather Service, such  
16 placement shall be treated as employment of the  
17 warning coordination meteorologist at such weather  
18 forecast office for purposes of subsection (a).

19 (e) DEFINITION OF STATE.—In this section, the term  
20 “State” means a State, a territory, or possession of the  
21 United States, including a Commonwealth, or the District  
22 of Columbia.

1 **SEC. 3. IMPROVING SYSTEM OF NATIONAL OCEANIC AND**  
2 **ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION FOR**  
3 **ISSUING SEVERE WEATHER WATCHES AND**  
4 **WARNINGS.**

5 (a) PURPOSE OF SYSTEM.—For purposes of the as-  
6 sessment required by subsection (b)(1)(A), the purpose of  
7 the system of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Ad-  
8 ministration for issuing severe weather watches and warn-  
9 ings shall be risk communication to the general public that  
10 informs action to prevent loss of life and property.

11 (b) ASSESSMENT OF SYSTEM.—

12 (1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 2 years after  
13 the date of the enactment of this Act, the Adminis-  
14 trator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Ad-  
15 ministration shall—

16 (A) assess the system of the National Oee-  
17 anic and Atmospheric Administration for  
18 issuing severe weather watches and warnings;  
19 and

20 (B) submit to Congress a report on the  
21 findings of the Administrator with respect to  
22 the assessment conducted under subparagraph  
23 (A).

24 (2) ELEMENTS.—The assessment required by  
25 paragraph (1)(A) shall include the following:

1           (A) An evaluation of whether the system of  
2 the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Admin-  
3 istration for issuing severe weather watches and  
4 warnings meets the purpose described in sub-  
5 section (a).

6           (B) Development of recommendations  
7 for—

8                 (i) legislative and administrative ac-  
9 tion to improve the system described in  
10 such subparagraph; and

11                (ii) such research as the Adminis-  
12 trator considers necessary to address the  
13 focus areas described in paragraph (3).

14           (3) FOCUS AREAS.—The assessment required  
15 by paragraph (1)(A) shall focus on the following:

16                 (A) Ways to communicate severe weather  
17 risks to the public that are most likely to result  
18 in action to mitigate the risk.

19                 (B) Ways to communicate severe weather  
20 risks to the public as broadly and rapidly as  
21 practicable.

22                 (C) Ways to preserve the benefits of the  
23 existing watches and warnings system.

1           (D) Ways to maintain the utility of the  
2 watches and warnings system for Government  
3 and commercial users of the system.

4           (4) CONSULTATION.—In conducting the assess-  
5 ment required by paragraph (1)(A), the Adminis-  
6 trator shall—

7           (A) consult with such line offices within  
8 the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Admin-  
9 istration as the Administrator considers rel-  
10 evant, including the National Ocean Service,  
11 the National Weather Service, and the Office of  
12 Oceanic and Atmospheric Research;

13           (B) consult with individuals in the aca-  
14 demic sector, including individuals in the field  
15 of social sciences, and other weather services;

16           (C) consult with media outlets that will be  
17 distributing the watches and warnings;

18           (D) consult with non-Federal forecasters  
19 that produce alternate severe weather risk com-  
20 munication products;

21           (E) consult with emergency planners and  
22 responders, including State and local emergency  
23 management agencies, and other government  
24 users of the watches and warnings system, in-  
25 cluding the Federal Emergency Management

1 Agency, the Office of Personnel Management,  
2 and the Coast Guard; and

3 (F) make use of the services of the Na-  
4 tional Academy of Sciences, as the Adminis-  
5 trator considers necessary and practicable.

6 (5) METHODOLOGIES.—In conducting the as-  
7 sessment required by paragraph (1)(A), the Admin-  
8 istrator shall use such methodologies as the Admin-  
9 istrator considers are generally accepted by the  
10 weather enterprise, including social sciences.

11 (c) IMPLEMENTATION OF NEW SYSTEM.—If, during  
12 the period beginning on the day after the date of the en-  
13 actment of this Act and ending on the date that is 4 years  
14 after the date of the enactment of this Act, a bill has not  
15 been enacted by Congress that specifically addresses mat-  
16 ters relating to improving the system of the National Oce-  
17 anic and Atmospheric Administration for issuing severe  
18 weather watches and warnings, the Administrator shall  
19 implement, not later than the date that is 5 years after  
20 the date of the enactment of this Act, a new system for  
21 issuing severe weather watches and warnings that is based  
22 on the findings of the Administrator with respect to the  
23 assessment conducted under subsection (b)(1)(A).



1 **SEC. 4. REPORT ON CONTRACT POSITIONS AT NATIONAL**  
2 **WEATHER SERVICE.**

3 (a) REPORT REQUIRED.—Not later than 180 days  
4 after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Adminis-  
5 trator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Adminis-  
6 tration shall submit to Congress a report on the use of  
7 contractors at the National Weather Service for the most  
8 recently completed fiscal year.

9 (b) CONTENTS.—The report required by subsection  
10 (a) shall include, with respect to the most recently com-  
11 pleted fiscal year, the following:

12 (1) The total number of full-time equivalent  
13 employees at the National Weather Service,  
14 disaggregated by each equivalent level of the General  
15 Schedule.

16 (2) The total number of full-time equivalent  
17 contractors at the National Weather Service,  
18 disaggregated by each equivalent level of the General  
19 Schedule that most closely approximates their du-  
20 ties.

21 (3) The total number of vacant positions at the  
22 National Weather Service on the day before the date  
23 of the enactment of this Act, disaggregated by each  
24 equivalent level of the General Schedule.

25 (4) The 5 most common positions filled by full-  
26 time equivalent contractors at the National Weather

1 Service and equivalent level of the General Schedule  
2 that most closely approximates the duties of such  
3 positions.

4 (5) Of the positions identified in paragraph (4),  
5 the percentage of full-time equivalent contractors in  
6 those positions that have held a prior position at the  
7 National Weather Service or another entity in the  
8 National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

9 (6) The average full-time equivalent salary for  
10 Federal employees at the National Weather Service  
11 for each equivalent level of the General Schedule.

12 (7) The average salary for full-time equivalent  
13 contractors performing at each equivalent level of  
14 the General Schedule at the National Weather Service.  
15

16 (8) A description of any actions taken by the  
17 Administrator to respond to the issues raised by the  
18 Inspector General of the Department of Commerce  
19 regarding the hiring of former National Oceanic and  
20 Atmospheric Administration employees as contractors  
21 at the National Weather Service, such as the  
22 issues raised in the Investigative Report dated June  
23 2015 (OIG-12-0447).

24 (c) ANNUAL PUBLICATION.—For each fiscal year  
25 after the fiscal year covered by the report required by sub-

1 section (a), the Administrator shall, not later than 180  
2 days after the completion of the fiscal year, publish on  
3 a publicly accessible Internet website the information de-  
4 scribed in paragraphs (1) through (6) of subsection (b)  
5 for such fiscal year.