



COMPTROLLER GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548

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DEC 8 - 1975

11 The Honorable Bob Dole CTR  
United States Senate

Dear Senator Dole:

As you requested<sup>74</sup> on June 10, 1975, we have reviewed the  
Department of Commerce's plans to move the National Oceanic  
and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA's) National Weather  
Service Technical Training Center from Kansas City, Missouri,  
to Seattle, Washington.

NOAA recently acquired 100 acres of surplus Department  
of Defense property at Sand Point in Seattle to develop a  
western regional facility. Plans for the facility include  
the construction of a training center to fill all of NOAA's  
technical training needs.

The major NOAA components and support organizations  
that will occupy the facility follow.

National Marine Fisheries Service:

- Northwest Regional Office
- Pacific Utilization Research Center
- Marine Mammals Division
- Coastal Zone and Estuarine Studies
- Marine Fish and Shellfish

National Weather Service

National Ocean Survey:

- Pacific Marine Center
- Northwest Regional Calibration Center

Scientific Publications

Environmental Research Laboratory:

- Pacific Marine Environmental Laboratory
- Marine Eco-Systems Analysis, Puget Sound Project

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Northwest Administrative Service Office

Education Center (training center)

Environmental Data Service

The June 1975 master schedule in the preliminary program of facility requirements calls for work on the facility to begin in January 1976. Construction of the training center is to begin in September 1979 and be completed in August 1981 (fiscal year 1981).

The project development plan, dated July 1, 1975, estimated that the western regional facility would cost about \$64 million. The estimate to construct the training center was \$4,580,000, in terms of 1975 dollars--excluding design, supervision, and inspection costs for which no estimates have been made. There would be an additional requirement of \$794,000 for training center equipment.

The Technical Training Center's primary responsibility is to train National Weather Service employees who have basic technical skills but need advanced training. About two-thirds of the students are given electronic technical courses, and about one-third receive meteorological technical courses. Courses are also offered in a scientific upward mobility program. Most courses run 21 days and are given on a year-round basis. Center officials said that, generally, about 70 students are in training in each session. In addition to the training offered by the Center, NOAA conducts supervisory training courses, equal employment opportunity training courses, managerial and executive courses, special programs, and junior officer programs. Except for the latter, which are given at the Merchant Marine Academy, the courses are given at irregular intervals at Rockville, Maryland, and in cities considered most convenient to the employees scheduled to attend. After the training center is completed in Seattle, NOAA plans to expand its training program to include skills training, technical and scientific seminars, pre-supervisory training, and short scientific and technical courses. NOAA plans to offer the courses, which will range from 1 to 5 days, principally in Rockville, Maryland, and Seattle.

A NOAA official said that no cost-effectiveness study was made on moving the Technical Training Center from Kansas City to Seattle but that a programmatic decision was made to consolidate NOAA training programs. As agreed with your office, we did not make a thorough cost-effectiveness study but obtained information on:

- The cost of moving equipment and personnel from Kansas City to Seattle.
- The cost of lost staff time and student training occasioned by such a move.
- The cost of student transportation, including both additional transportation costs and staff-hours lost from longer flight times.
- A comparison of initial outlays for office and training facilities in the two cities and the availability of other facilities, especially the Olathe Naval Air Station near Kansas City.

COST OF MOVING EQUIPMENT AND PERSONNEL

We estimate that it would cost about \$13,700 to move the Technical Training Center's special equipment and furniture, plus about \$12,000 for the general office and remaining classroom furniture. In making our estimate we used the actual or estimated weights for the equipment and furniture to be moved and rates from the Household Goods Carriers' Bureau Tariffs in effect in July 1975.

Based on NOAA's projection of training needs in fiscal year 1982, the Center's professional staff will increase to 60 and the student enrollment to 1,550.

We estimate that it would cost about \$545,200 to move a 60-man professional staff from Kansas City to Seattle.

Our estimate was based on the cost to move a family of four that would (1) travel by car, (2) stay in temporary quarters for the maximum period allowable, (3) elect to store household goods for 30 days, (4) move 9,000 pounds of household goods, (5) incur real estate expenses in selling and buying homes, and (6) claim the allowable \$200 in miscellaneous expenses.

The estimate to move personnel does not include any of the Kansas City nonprofessional staff because most of them have indicated that they would not move.

About one-half of the current professional staff indicated that they probably would not move to Seattle. Accordingly, the \$545,200 estimate would be decreased by the cost for those professionals not moving and increased by the cost of moving replacements for them from other locations and members of the nonprofessional staff who may decide to

move. The Government could incur additional costs for severance pay and early retirement for eligible employees who terminate rather than relocate.

COST OF LOST STAFF TIME AND  
STUDENT TRAINING

Center officials estimated that the move from Kansas City to Seattle would necessitate a 3- to 5-month shutdown if the new site were equipped with all the necessary wiring to accommodate training equipment. The cost of lost staff time in making the move would be reduced if the professional staff members, who are technicians, are used to disconnect the equipment at the Kansas City site and to install it at the Seattle site. Staff-time costs would be increased by the cost to train replacement instructors for those who decide not to move.

Using the salaries in effect on August 16, 1975, the cost of lost staff training time for the projected staff of 60 professionals would be about \$286,600 if there were a 3-month interruption of training and about \$477,700 for a 5-month interruption. The Center's director was unable to furnish an estimate of the cost of the lost student training occasioned by the planned move, nor could we develop a basis for making such an estimate.

COST OF STUDENT TRANSPORTATION  
AND STAFF-HOURS LOST

We estimate that student transportation costs would increase about \$98 per student, or about \$152,000 annually. This estimate is based on a student load of 1,550 projected for 1982. Our estimate was based on a sample of the students attending courses in Kansas City during fiscal years 1974 and 1975 to determine the difference between the distances traveled from their homes to Kansas City and that which would have to be traveled to Seattle. We used the air fares in effect on June 1, 1975, to compute the additional costs.

Moving the Technical Training Center to Seattle would not affect most class starting times but would impair flexibility in scheduling some courses because of longer flight times and difficulties which might be experienced in travel between Seattle and east coast cities.

Most of the classes at the Center run for 3 weeks each and begin on either a Tuesday or a Wednesday and end on a Thursday. This permits students to travel during working hours. Some of the 1-week courses have begun at noon on Monday and ended at noon on the following Friday. This

schedule could not be continued if the Center were moved to Seattle because the longer flight times would not permit travel within working hours.

We did not compute the cost of student hours lost due to the longer flights to Seattle because, generally, none of the students' time is spent in training on the day of travel.

COMPARISON OF INITIAL OUTLAYS  
IN THE TWO CITIES AND CONSIDERATION  
OF OTHER FACILITIES

A comparison of the costs of initial outlays for office and training facilities in the two cities could not be made. Information to make this comparison was not available, nor could NOAA officials furnish realistic estimates of such costs.

According to the June 1975 preliminary program of the facility, extensive equipment requirements are being planned for the training center. Its educational functions will include basic technical training and on-the-job type training, which will duplicate or simulate equipment systems in NOAA's operational components. Planning activities for the training center will include the transfer and relocation of such systems plus equipment currently in Kansas City. Apparently, if the Technical Training Center remains in Kansas City, increased costs would be limited to those necessary to accommodate the projected increase in student load and expanded training.

We inquired into the action taken by NOAA on (1) the availability of alternate sites for relocating the Technical Training Center and (2) the possibility of remaining at its present location.

The Center's director has visited the Olathe Naval Air Station, Johnson County, Kansas, which had been suggested as a possible site. The director informed us that, except for an officers' club and a bachelor officers' quarters, the site consisted principally of cleared land. New buildings would have to be constructed for classrooms, office space, and auxiliary needs. The advantages of this location were (1) adequate open space for installing weather service equipment to be used in instructing students under actual conditions and (2) the officers' club and the bachelor officers' quarters could be converted to living quarters for the students. The availability of close living and training facilities would provide a convenience to the students for extra study. The disadvantages of the site were that it would be (1) about 50 miles from the nearest airport and probably

would not be served by public transportation and (2) isolated from city-type facilities for use of students during nonacademic hours.

In 1974 the director made trips to a former college at Carthage, Missouri, and a training school at Cheyenne, Wyoming, which had been suggested as alternate sites. He felt that these locations did not warrant further consideration because of disadvantages associated with them.

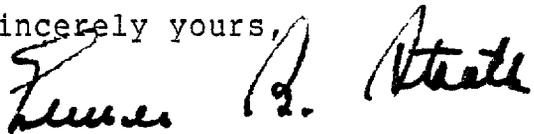
A General Services Administration official informed us that the Technical Training Center could be expanded at its present location and that there would be no problem in providing it with adequate space in the Kansas City area, at least through 1981.

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As agreed with your office, we inquired as to the type of in-house training provided and training resources used by NOAA. Enclosed is a copy of a letter dated August 7, 1975, from the Administrator, NOAA, providing this information.

As directed by your office, we did not obtain comments from NOAA.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James A. Steele". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J".

Comptroller General  
of the United States

Enclosure



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
Rockville, Md. 20852 AD1

AUG 7 1975

U.S. General Accounting Office  
General Government Division  
Attn: John Landicho, Associate Director  
Washington, D. C. 20548

Dear Mr. Landicho:

This is in response to your letter of July 29 requesting information concerning our plans to relocate the National Weather Service Technical Training Center from Kansas City, Missouri to Seattle, Washington. Specifically, you posed four questions to which the following answers are furnished in the sequence asked:

1. The in-house training now being performed by NOAA in addition to the National Weather Service Technical Training School is as follows:

- a. Supervisory Courses - Effective Supervision, Supervision and Group Performance, and Personnel Management for Supervisors.
- b. Equal Opportunity Program Training - Focus on Understanding, Three-day Supervisory Seminar.
- c. Managerial and Executive Training - Commerce Department Executive and Managerial Courses.
- d. Special Programs - Management by Objectives, Career Counseling, Upward Mobility and Orientation Training.
- e. Junior Officer Training Program.

2. NOAA does intend to expand its training. The expansion will include the following types of training:

- a. Technical training for shipboard personnel in cartography, hydrography, oceanography, electronics, and other specialties required by shipboard personnel.
- b. Science seminars in the various scientific fields pertinent to NOAA's mission.



c. Skills training for technical and nontechnical personnel.

3. Assuming fund availability, the latest schedule calls for construction of the school facility to begin in September 1979 with completion scheduled for May 1981.

4. The estimated cost of constructing the facility is \$4,580,000 in terms of 1975 dollars without design or supervision and inspection costs included, with an additional requirement of \$794,000 for equipment.

Over the past several years, NOAA has endeavored to establish close working relationships with universities which have had strong emphasis on the atmospheric sciences and oceanography. The mutual benefits gained from this association affords the university access to expertise from the NOAA scientific community while also making university scientists available to NOAA for research, exchange and interchange of talents and ideas and for educational instruction. In this context, we view the establishment of a training center in Seattle with its close proximity to the University of Washington, with its outstanding Department of Meteorology and Oceanography, as an immensely important asset to the NOAA Education Center.

I trust that the above information is responsive to your inquiry and will suffice for your use in response to Senator Robert J. Dole.

Sincerely,



Robert M. White  
Administrator