



September 22, 2014

**MEMORANDUM FOR:** Thomas F. Burns  
Deputy Assistant Administrator for Systems  
National Environmental Satellite, Data, and Information Service  
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

**FROM:**   
Todd J. Zinser

**SUBJECT:** OIG Review of Improper Expenditure for GOES-R Ground Segment Team Activity (OIG Case 14-0475-P)

Attached is our final report detailing the findings of our investigation into the sufficiency of time and attendance adjustments made by GOES-R Ground Segment staff members to account for their participation in a GOES-R Ground Segment team event in May 2013, which involved lunch and a matinee showing of a Star Trek movie.

Although the evidence established that the event was designed to boost morale, bolster team unity, and re-motivate the staff toward the GOES-R mission, this event was social in nature and provided no professional development for GOES-R personnel. Accordingly, we concluded that the time taken by GOES-R personnel to attend the event should not have been billed to the government. Our investigation established that twenty-one GOES-R Ground Segment staff members participated in the team event to varying degrees. While 17 of the employees who participated in the event properly accounted for the event or made up the time by working extra hours during the same pay period, we found that four GOES-R Ground Segment contract employees improperly billed their participation in the event to the GOES-R project and did not otherwise make up the time, resulting in \$1,460.12 in taxpayer-funded wages initially charged to the government. We also concluded that GOES-R Ground Segment management failed to provide guidance to its staff regarding appropriate timekeeping for the event, which would have resolved the apparent confusion among participants.

Although we found that the amount improperly billed to the federal government was subsequently refunded by the respective contract companies, we note that the credits were made only after the OIG initiated its review into the team activity, and we found no evidence indicating that GOES-R management or the contract companies would have recognized the improper billing absent the OIG review.

As a result of our findings, we made recommendations to prevent improper billing for similar events in the future. Specifically, we recommended that NOAA provide clear and appropriate written guidance on proper timekeeping to agency and contract staff in advance of government-sanctioned team events in the future. We also recommended that NOAA provide training to agency and contract staff to ensure that all GOES-R employees, including contractors, are aware



of the applicable regulations concerning accurate timekeeping for government-sanctioned team events and obligations to disclose fraud and false claims. We would appreciate a response detailing the agency's plans for addressing these recommendations within 60 days.

We intend to post our investigation report to our public website. We would like to thank NOAA and the GOES-R Ground Segment staff for their cooperation during this investigation. If you have any further questions or comments about this report, please contact me, or Morgan Kim, Deputy Inspector General and Assistant Inspector General for Investigations, at (202) 482-4661.

**Attachment**