



# Report in Brief

November 30, 2016

## Background

The mission of the National Weather Service (NWS), a line office within the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), is to provide weather, water, and climate data, as well as forecasts and warnings for the protection of life and property and enhancement of the national economy. NWS is the official and authoritative voice for issuing warnings during life-threatening weather situations in the United States. NWS uses employees and contractors to complete its mission. Between FY 2012 and June 2015, NWS executed 2,217 service contract actions.

The government's use of contractors creates risks that NOAA needs to consider and manage. One such risk is the potential for development of inappropriate employer-employee relationships between contractors and government personnel, such as contract officers (COs), contracting officer representatives (CORs), and task managers. Improper employer-employee relationships with contractors can change the nature of the contract, which can result in contract performance that is personal in nature. Unless otherwise authorized by statute, agencies are prohibited from obtaining personal services by contract.

## Why We Did This Review

The objective of this audit was to evaluate whether NWS has adequate controls in place to ensure compliance with applicable laws and regulations for personnel support acquired through service contracts. To accomplish this objective, we reviewed 20 judgmentally selected service contracts that were awarded between October 1, 2011, and June 30, 2015.

## NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION

### National Weather Service's Oversight of Service Contracts, Documentation Retention, and Reporting Needs Improvement

OIG-17-007-A

## WHAT WE FOUND

Our audit disclosed deficiencies concerning NWS' control over the administration and oversight of service contracts. Specifically, we determined that in 3 of the 20 service contracts reviewed the administration and oversight had characteristics that may be perceived as an improper employer-employee relationship.

The audit also disclosed that NOAA needs to strengthen control over retention of key documents and reporting of information to Congress. As a result, we are making recommendations to strengthen internal control over NOAA's and NWS' administration and oversight of service contractors, document retention, and reporting.

## WHAT WE RECOMMEND

We recommend that the Director of the NOAA Acquisition and Grants Office

1. Provide training to NWS CORs and task managers on Federal Acquisition Regulation requirements related to personal services contracts, including activities that can lead to perception of prohibited employer-employee relationships.
2. Issue guidance that requires analysis and other relevant documentation supporting the Service Contract Inventory Analysis Report to be maintained in accordance with applicable agency records schedules.

We recommend that the Director of NWS along with the Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere and NOAA Administrator

3. Develop procedures to ensure its responses to congressional requests specify any applicable data limitations related to the provided information.