

**NEWS from the North Dakota Department of Human Services
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North Dakota State Hospital recognized for recording daily weather observations for the past 125 years

BISMARCK, N.D. – The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and its National Weather Service (NWS) awarded the North Dakota State Hospital with an Institution Award for recording daily weather observations for 125 consecutive years. Staff members have recorded precipitation, temperature and other observations daily, without fail, since the hospital became part of the voluntary Cooperative Weather Observation Program in 1891 – two years after North Dakota gained statehood.

Historic weather data is used to study an area's climate. Daily weather observations also help shape forecasts. The data is used by meteorologists, universities, agricultural specialists, insurance companies and other organizations, and is available online through NOAA's National Centers for Environmental Information at www.ncdc.noaa.gov/cdo-web/search.

Heating Plant Supervisor Duane Duff has been a part of the observation team for the past 30 years. He said, "This is an award for the hospital, not an individual, because it is due entirely to the diligent efforts of each former and current Heating Plant team member that these readings have been taken every day for 125 years."

Each day at the scheduled time, a team member goes outside and measures precipitation totals using NOAA-certified equipment, Duff said. If it snows, this involves melting the snow from a gauge to determine moisture content. A digital thermometer captures and records temperatures throughout the day, including highs and lows.

Staff members report their observations to NOAA using an automated system. Years ago, hospital staff members mailed a log sheet each month to the NWS.

Duff said that he has gained an interest in meteorology after monitoring weather conditions over the years.

The State Hospital's Plant Services Director Todd Wilen and Duff participated in an award ceremony at the NOAA NWS Office in Bismarck in mid-October. It included a congratulatory phone call from Chris Strager, Director of the NWS Central Region Headquarters in Kansas City, MO.

North Dakota State Climatologist F. Adnan Akyüz, PhD., also congratulated them. Even with all the instrumentation and models, he said the information still needs to be verified by human observers.

The State Hospital is one of the oldest continuous weather observation stations in North Dakota. Stations that began collecting data earlier include Garrison (1876), Williston (1878), and Napoleon (1889).

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