

Guidelines for Statements of the American Meteorological Society

(Adopted by the AMS Council on 20 January 2008, with
amendments through 1 October 2009)

(In force for at most ten years and must be reissued or revised before January 2018)

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1. Purpose

The American Meteorological Society (AMS) promotes the development and dissemination of information and education on the atmospheric and related oceanic and hydrologic sciences and the advancement of their professional applications. Founded in 1919, AMS has a membership of more than 14,000 professionals (in government, the private sector and academia), students and weather enthusiasts. As a service to its members, and in fulfillment of its larger responsibilities to human society, the AMS periodically issues statements on topics that fall within the scope of AMS expertise.

This set of guidelines provides an explanation of statements of the AMS. It defines four types of statements that are differentiated according to purpose and intended audience. Thorough yet expedient processes are established for the initiation, preparation, review, revision and approval of each type, and methods of dissemination are suggested. Guidelines are given for determining statements' time in force and for updating statements. A procedure is established for preparing joint statements with other professional societies and organizations and for endorsing statements by other organizations.

2. Types of Statements

The Council of the AMS is responsible for issuing statements on behalf of the Society. In doing so it depends on the contributions of many AMS members in the development, preparation, and review of statements. The AMS issues four types of statements, distinguished mainly on the basis of their purposes and intended audience, as articulated in this section. Procedures for initiating, preparing, reviewing, revising, and approving are different for each type, as described in Section 3.

A. Professional Guidance Statements

The purpose of Professional Guidance Statements is to alert AMS members to urgent or important AMS, professional or scientific matters. Because the intended audience is the membership of the AMS, Professional Guidance Statements may include technical and scientific language generally familiar to AMS members but perhaps not familiar to nonprofessionals or the general public. Professional Guidance statements are typically no longer than 1000 words.

B. Information Statements

Information Statements are intended to provide a trustworthy, objective and scientifically up-to-date explanation of scientific issues of concern to the public at large. They are informational only and do not make recommendations or take positions on issues. Information Statements should use language easily understood by a lay reader and avoid technical terminology and jargon. Information statements are typically no longer than 2000 words.

C. Policy Statements

Policy statements are aimed at representatives of local, state, or Federal government, officials of international bodies, and related policy professionals. Policy statements may be prepared in response to requests from government officials or initiated by AMS personnel or members. The purpose(s) of a Policy Statement may be one or more of the following:

- To advocate a position on science and technology issues of concern to AMS members;
- To provide analysis, articulate the state of scientific understanding, or express the concern of the scientific community about issues pertinent to a current public policy issue;
- To raise awareness of a scientific issue with potential future policy implications;
- To make policy recommendations based on the professional and scientific expertise and perspectives of the AMS.

Policy Statements may form the basis for AMS testimony and briefings to government officials. The language of Policy Statements should be understandable to an educated reader and should avoid technical and scientific jargon. Policy statements are typically no longer than 750 words.

D. Guidelines for Statements of the AMS

The purpose of the Guidelines for Statements of the American Meteorological Society is to provide clear and complete guidance on the types, purposes, preparation and dissemination of AMS statements. There will be only one set of Guidelines for Statements of the AMS in force at any given time. The audience of these guidelines is AMS officials and members, especially those involved in preparing AMS statements, although they may also be informative to individuals outside AMS seeking an understanding of the process by which statements come into force. The Guidelines for Statements of the AMS should be written in nontechnical, nonlegalistic language and provide instructions that are unambiguous.

3. Process and Timetables for Preparation, Review and Revision

The basic steps leading to completion of a statement of the AMS are as follows: initiation, appointment of a drafting committee, drafting of the statement by the drafting committee, review, revision, and AMS Council approval. To ensure the efficiency of the process and the timeliness of the resulting statement, these steps must occur within a specified period of time (see section 9). For each of the four types of statements described in Section 2, the process and timetables are slightly different, as detailed below.

In all cases, the membership of the drafting committee includes at least one member of the AMS Council. That member should continue to serve on the drafting committee through completion of the statement, even if his/her Council term expires, to maintain the continuity of Council representation and input to the process.

A. Initiation and Appointment of a Drafting Committee

Professional Guidance Statements

Professional Guidance Statements are initiated by the AMS Executive Committee or the AMS Council. The drafting committee is appointed by the Executive Committee and is composed of four to six individuals, including:

- At least one chair (or chair's designee) of an AMS Board or Committee. The Board or Committee is selected by the relevant AMS Commissioner for its disciplinary expertise;
- At least one Council member;
- Two to four other subject-matter experts, at least two of whom are AMS members.

Information Statements

Information Statements are initiated by the Executive Committee or Council, possibly as a result of suggestions from other AMS officials, AMS members or external requests. A drafting committee of six to ten individuals is appointed by the Council and includes:

- At least one chair (or chair's designee) of an AMS Board or Committee. The Board or Committee is selected by the relevant AMS Commissioner for its disciplinary expertise;
- At least one Council member;
- Three to eight other subject-matter experts, at least three of whom are AMS members.

Before the membership of the drafting committee is finalized, AMS members are notified that the statement is being undertaken so that individuals may volunteer to participate.

Policy Statements

Policy Statements are initiated by the Executive Committee or Council, possibly as a result of suggestions from other AMS officials, AMS members or external requests. A drafting committee of eight to twelve individuals is appointed by the Council and includes:

- At least one member of the professional staff of the AMS Policy Program;
- At least two chairs (or their designees) of AMS Boards or Committees, selected by the relevant AMS Commissioner for their disciplinary expertise;
- At least one Council member;
- Four to eight other subject-matter experts, at least four of whom are AMS members.

Before the drafting committee is finalized, AMS members are notified that the statement is being undertaken so that individuals may volunteer to participate.

If and when it is apparent to the drafting committee that a consensus cannot be reached among drafting committee members, or AMS members, on aspects of the policy issue under consideration, the drafting committee may decide to include language in the statement reflecting

the existence of the minority viewpoint within the community. No separate minority policy statements are to be issued.

Guidelines for Statements of the AMS

The Guidelines for Statements of the AMS is initiated by the Executive Committee or Council. The Executive Committee appoints a drafting committee, composed of four to six individuals, including:

- At least one AMS Commissioner or chair of an AMS Board or Committee, who serves as chair of the drafting committee. At least one of these individuals should be the STAC Commissioner or a STAC Chair;
- At least one Council member;
- One professional staff member from the AMS Policy Program.

B. Review and Approval

Professional Guidance, Information, and Policy Statements all undergo the same multi-stage review process following the completion of the initial draft. An overview of the major decision points in the process is provided here, but see section 9 for a detailed timeline that includes all steps. Throughout the statement creation process, the Council works with the drafting committee, providing feedback and guidance at various stages to help ensure the draft statement reflects the position of the Society. The Executive Director moderates this interaction.

The AMS Council reviews the first draft and, by simple majority of those Councilors eligible to vote on an e-mail ballot, either approves the statement as sufficiently ready to solicit comments from AMS members, or returns the statement to the drafting committee with suggestions for changes that should be made before it is ready for comment. In the latter case, the revised draft is again submitted to the Council for approval, using the same e-mail ballot procedure.

If the Council does not approve the revised draft, the drafting committee prepares a second revision. If the Council does not approve the second revision, the drafting committee is disbanded and the Council may appoint a new drafting committee and the process begins anew. This option should be exercised only as a last resort.

Once the draft statement has been approved by the Council, comments are solicited from AMS members, including the Council, during a 30-day period. After consideration of AMS member comments, the drafting committee prepares a new draft for Council consideration along with a point-by-point response to all comments. The Council considers this draft and, by simple majority vote through a deliberative process, approves it as written or with minor edits, suggests substantive changes, or rejects the draft. If substantive changes are requested, the resulting draft is passed back to the drafting committee for action, and a revised draft is returned to the Council for reconsideration. The Council considers the drafting team's revisions and, by simple majority vote through a deliberative process, approves the final form of the statement with any additional corrections that are deemed necessary. The period of time from appointment of the drafting committee to approval by the Council must not exceed eight months.

The review process for the Guidelines for Statements of the AMS is slightly different from the other three types of statements. The AMS Council reviews the first draft of the guidelines and may either approve that draft without revision or approve it as a first draft and provide comments to guide a revision by the drafting committee. In either case, the approval is by simple majority vote. If revisions are requested, the drafting committee responds with a final version for Council approval by simple majority vote. There is no provision for review of the guidelines by AMS members. The period of time from appointment of drafting committee to final approval by the Council must not exceed six months. The Council can amend the Guideline for Statements with minor changes intended to clarify the process at any time, with a simple majority vote through a deliberative process.

4. Dissemination of Statements

Dissemination of AMS statements should be an integral part of the initiating, writing and review process. The ultimate audience for the statement must be kept in mind during the entire process to ensure the statement has the desired result and impact. The following general guidelines for the dissemination of the AMS statements may be adjusted for each statement. Each drafting committee should work with the Atmospheric Policy Program and other AMS departments to develop a specific dissemination plan to ensure the statement reaches all targeted audiences.

Professional Guidance Statements typically will be published on the AMS Web site, appear in the *Bulletin of the AMS*, and be sent to members via list serves, email, letters or other such means. Occasionally Professional Guidance Statements might be of interest to the general public, the media and government officials and should be released as appropriate, in coordination with the AMS Policy Program and other AMS staff.

Information Statements by nature have a wider distribution to reach the general public. They typically will be published on the AMS Web site, appear in the *Bulletin of the AMS*, and be sent to members via list serves, emails, letters and other communication vehicles. Depending on their timeliness and content, Information Statements may be distributed to the media through press releases and press events and to Federal, state and local government representatives through visits, meetings, programs sponsored by the AMS Policy Program, and direct mail. The statements may also be made available to the general public through the AMS partnership with *Weatherwise* magazine and other partner organizations.

Policy Statements are specifically aimed at representatives of local, state and Federal government, officials of international organizations and related policy professionals. Therefore the primary distribution will be through means that reach this target audience including email, list serves, journal publication, direct mail, visits and meetings, programs sponsored by the AMS Policy Program, and testimony. These statements may also be of interest to the general public and media, which will be determined during the writing and review process.

5. Time in Force and Update Procedures

When a statement of the AMS is approved, it must contain language specifying the maximum time period for which it will remain in force.

Professional Guidance Statements and Information Statements may remain in force for at most five years. At any point during the period in force, the Council may decide that a statement should lapse, be reissued, or be revised. If revised, the writing process for the revision is the same as that for a new statement. If no such decision has been taken by the end of the five-year period, the statement automatically lapses.

Policy Statements may remain in force for at most three years, with time in force to be determined by the Council when the statement is issued. There is no provision for continuation or revision. At the end of the time in force, the statement automatically lapses.

The Guidelines for Statements of the AMS may remain in force for at most ten years. At any point during the period in force, the Council may decide the statement should be revised. If the guidelines are about to lapse, plans must be made for re-issuance or revision, so that there is always a set of Guidelines for Statements of the AMS in force.

6. Statement Formats and Writing Style

Statements should be written so as to maximize their clarity, brevity, and likelihood to make an impact. All statements should use language suitable to the intended audience, as noted above in Section 2 (Types of Statements), and should be edited before issuance by an AMS editor for proper spelling, grammar and usage.

All statements should be as concise as possible. Recommended word limits are as follows: Professional Guidance Statements should not exceed 1000 words; Information Statements should not exceed 2000 words; and Policy Statements should not exceed 750 words. A statement should begin with a summary paragraph if its total length is more than two-thirds of the maximum word count.

Statements may be issued with an accompanying “white paper” providing detailed or technical background supporting a position taken in a statement. Statements of the AMS are issued by the Council and therefore do not name authors, but white papers may be issued with authors’ names. White papers may contain scientific and technical references, which should generally be avoided in statements.

7. Partnering with Other Professional Societies and Organizations

To maximize the impact of AMS statements, AMS should strive to partner whenever possible with other professional societies and organizations in issuing joint statements on topics of mutual interest. To do so, however, the writing, review and approval processes described herein should

not be compromised, so that all jointly issued statements meet the same standards as statements issued solely by the AMS.

AMS should also seek to endorse suitable statements from other societies and organizations and to obtain endorsement for AMS statements. Endorsements by AMS of statements issued by other organizations are subject to the approval of the AMS Council, by a three-quarters majority vote by e-mail ballot.

8. Summary of Statement Types and Attributes

The following table summarizes basic information about each type of AMS Statement, as described in Sections 2–6 above.

Statement Type	Primary Audience	Drafting Committee and Chair	Maximum Length	Maximum Time to Complete	Maximum Time in Force
Professional Guidance Statements	AMS members	Total: 4–6: <u>1+ Chair of an AMS Board or Committee;</u> 1+ Council member; 2–4 Other experts	1000 words	8 months	5 years
Information Statements	Public	Total: 6–10: <u>1+ Chair of an AMS Board or Committee;</u> 1+ Council member; 3–8 Other experts	2000 words	8 months	5 years
Policy Statements	Policy-makers	Total: 8–12: <u>1+ AMS Policy Program staff;</u> 2+ Chairs of AMS Boards or Committees; 1+ Council member; 4–8 Other experts	750 words	8 months	3 years
Guidelines for Statements of the AMS	AMS members and officials	Total: 4–6: <u>1+ AMS Commissioner or Chair of an AMS Board or Committee;</u> 1+ Council member; 1 AMS Policy Program staff.	Not specified	6 months	10 years

9. Timeline for Professional Guidance, Information, and Policy Statements

The “Time” indication is an approximate point in time relative to the drafting team approval date for the start of that step. [The time shown in brackets is the expected average time to complete the step.] The times provided represent a reasonable timeline for a statement to complete the process in seven months rather than the strict deadline of eight months. This allows an assessment for a particular statement of whether the process is running ahead of, or behind, schedule to make the eight-month deadline. Throughout the process, the Executive Director moderates and guides the interactions among the drafting team, AMS staff, and Council to help ensure the timeline is met.

1. Time: –2.5 months [14 days]

A proposal (~150 words) justifying the need for a statement presented to (or possibly generated within) the Executive Committee or Council

- Council member volunteers to serve on drafting team
- Staff member(s) on drafting team named (depending on statement type)
- If statement idea had been generated from within the commission structure, commissioner identifies appropriate board or committee chair to work with Council and staff member on next steps
- The Executive Committee or Council provides feedback on proposal, either approving proposal to move on to next step or asking for revised proposal that incorporates feedback

2. Time: –2 months [30 days]

Notice placed on AMS Web site (and disseminated via listserves) announcing topic and opportunity for AMS members to volunteer to serve on drafting team

3. Time: –1 month [14 days]

Drafting Team core (Councilor, staff member(s), and committee or board chair) prepare a proposed complete drafting team using volunteers as appropriate but supplementing team with individuals who will be asked to serve. Proposal should include very brief bio on each drafting team member and indicate which of those proposed volunteered. (Document should also indicate how many individuals volunteered but need not identify volunteers not recommended for service or explain why they were not selected.) The proposed drafting team should include a short list (typically three) of potential chairs or co-chairs for the drafting team, with justification for each that considers not just the scientific expertise of the individual, but also their ability to write to the broad audience intended for statements. In addition, the potential chairs’ experience in similar efforts should be mentioned. A brief outline or précis is also prepared at this time.

4. Time: –0.5 months [14 days]

Council is presented with proposed drafting team and précis. Council selects, via e-mail discussion, the chair or co-chairs from the short list of candidates.

Marker: Council approves drafting team and précis by e-mail ballot -- 8-month clock starts

5. *Time: 0 months [60 days]*

Drafting team prepares first draft of statement. Council member on the drafting committee is expected to provide periodic updates to the Council on progress and content of the Statement during the 8-month period. This may require sharing early drafts of the Statement with Council. It is the responsibility of the chair or co-chairs to ensure that the statement is moving forward on or ahead of schedule over the next eight months.

6. *Time: 2 months [10 days]*

Draft provided to Council for informal feedback to drafting committee.

7. *Time: 2.3 months [4 days]*

AMS editors edit the draft statement and pass it back to the drafting team for review before being presented to Council.

8. *Time: 2.5 months [14 days]*

Council sent draft with e-mail ballot to approve posting for member comment

9. *Time: 3 months [30 days]*

Draft posted for review and comment by AMS members (including Council)

10. *Time: 4 months [60 days]*

Drafting team revises draft in response to comments and prepares report for Council on new draft that shows a point-by-point response to all comments and shows how draft was modified. Conference call or meeting date for Council consideration set with at least 30 days' notice.

11. *Time: 6 months [7 days]*

AMS editors edit the new draft statement and pass it back to the drafting team for review before being presented to Council.

12. *Time: 6.25 months [21 days]*

Council considers new draft and responses to comments. Carries out some online discussion prior to scheduled conference call or meeting. On conference call or at meeting, the Council approves as written, with revisions as deemed necessary, or rejects draft.

13. *Time: 7 months [10 days]*

If draft is substantively revised by Council, new draft passed back to drafting team for review and comment. Conference call or meeting date for Council consideration set with at least 30 days' notice.

14. *Time: 7.3 months [21 days]*

On conference call or at meeting, Council considers drafting team comments, makes minor revisions as necessary, approves final draft.

Marker: Council approves statement at 8 months

15. Time: 8 months [30 days]

Statement is posted on AMS Web site, published in next available issue of BAMS, and disseminated through press releases and letters to agency heads, Congressional staff members, or other policymakers as appropriate given the statement.

[This statement is considered in force until January 2018 unless superseded by a new statement issued by the AMS Council before this date.]

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