

## **AMS Seal of Approval Program**

(Approved by AMS Council 11 January 2004; Revised October 2006 and July 2007 – changes to section 3c; revised October 2007 – changes to section 3a)

**As of 31 December 2008, the AMS is no longer accepting applications for the Seal of Approval Program.**

### **1. The program as of 2004**

The goal of the Seal of Approval program is to continuously upgrade radio and television weather programs. Since the weathercaster is the primary representative of the meteorological profession to the public, we, as meteorologists, have a responsibility to help distinguish those who are competent. The Board of Broadcast Meteorology was formed by the Council in 1957 to establish criteria for the evaluation of weathercasters and to conduct the evaluation procedure. The growth of television and radio has been accompanied by an increasing impact on the public; therefore, the need for certified broadcast meteorologists and their recognition by the AMS has been quite apparent.

Evaluation procedures were established and the first television and radio tapes were evaluated by the Board in late 1959. The first Seals of Approval, other than for Board members, were granted in January 1960. Seals have been awarded to weathercasters with widely varied approaches to presenting the weather on television. To date, over 1300 Television and over 150 Radio Seals of Approval have been awarded. It has always been the goal of the Seal of Approval program to foster high standards of professionalism among broadcast meteorologists. Recently, however, the courts have attacked the use of the term “professionalism” as being overbroad and capable of misuse. Indeed, this standard has many different meanings to different individuals. The Society has produced a more specific definition. Henceforth, the stated goals of the program are to promote scientific competence and effective communication skills in TV and Radio weather forecasts.

### **2. Board of Broadcast Meteorology**

This Board is a standing committee of the Society under the Commission on Professional Affairs. It is responsible for considering applications and making recommendations in regard to certification. The Board consists of twelve certified members who do not hold elective office in the Society and who contribute their time and interest to the program. An attempt should be made to ensure that no member is professionally employed by the same organization as another member during tenure on the Board. Members are appointed by Council action for terms of three years. In order to ensure the fairness of the examination procedures, the Board has adopted the policy that its members will avoid conflicts of interest in the evaluation process. Members will continue to avoid such conflicts by disqualifying themselves from evaluating competitors or business associates when such relationships would interfere with their impartiality.

### **3. Procedures for Certification**

**Applications for the AMS Seal of Approval will not be accepted after 31 December 2008.** After this date, the only broadcast certification program accepting applicants will be the AMS Certified Broadcast Meteorologist (CBM) program (see the CBM program description for details on the requirements and application procedures for this program.)

1) Seal of Approval applications will only be accepted from individuals who meet the requirements for education and work experience. Applications and AMS Seal of Approval Program requirements may be found on the AMS Web site at <http://www.ametsoc.org>.

2) Applicants successfully satisfying requirement 1 will then submit tapes of three consecutive working weathercasts for review by the AMS Broadcast Board.

a. Selection of evaluating committee (revised October 2007 – addition of Spanish-language evaluators):

The Society will select five members of the Board, who will constitute the reviewing panel for that applicant. Each member of the panel shall certify to the Chairperson that he or she is aware of no conflict of interest in accepting the appointment to review any particular applicant. The applicant will be notified in writing of the names and occupations of the members selected and will be given an opportunity to object to any of the Board members selected. An applicant shall be required to state in writing the reasons for any objection to any member of the panel. The Chairperson may either accept the objection from the applicant or refer the question to the Chairperson of the Commission on Professional Affairs for final decision; the Commissioner shall act on the preponderance of the evidence. All applicants shall be notified that unless objection is received within 15 days, the Chairperson will assume that the selected Board members are satisfactory to the applicant and will proceed to the next step.

Applicants from Spanish-language television stations may choose to have their application evaluated by the AMS standing panel of Spanish-language evaluators. Spanish language applicants must supply an English transcript with their DVDs as part of the application process. All written communication with applicants will be done in English. The procedure for an objection to any member of the panel is referenced above.

b. Submission of evaluation materials

The Chairperson will then request that the applicant submit three examples of his or her work. These examples must be of broadcasts made on three consecutive appearance days. In the case of individuals currently employed "on-air," the tapes shall be of actual on-air performances, including any lead-ins and throw-backs to other on-air talent. All commercial messages shall be edited out of the tape. No minimum time of each segment will be required. Weathercasts recorded "off-air" will be accepted from applicants not currently employed on-air and from those applicants who operate under such restrictions from their station management that they cannot include the content or demonstrate the presentation skills consistent with the standards of the AMS Broadcast Seal of Approval. Performances on DVDs submitted must be less than six months old as of the date of the application. Applicants must also certify that weathercasts submitted are substantially the result of their own work.

c. Grading process

The applicant sends a copy of his or her tapes directly to each member of the reviewing panel. The Board will review the tapes based on four criteria:

1) *Technical competence*

This category will be used to evaluate whether the information contained therein is scientifically and technically valid.

2) *Informational value*

This category will be used to evaluate whether the candidate has given the audience sufficient information about recent, current, and anticipated weather conditions locally and nationally.

3) *Explanatory value*

Reviewers are asked to determine whether or not the candidate has given sufficient explanation of the processes that produce the recent, current, and anticipated weather conditions.

4) *Communication skills*

This criterion is intended to measure the effectiveness of the means chosen by the candidate to communicate information and explanations. Since this is a highly subjective area, only a candidate's clear failure to communicate the information will be judged as grounds for failure. Subjective judgments concerning appearance, sets, lead-ins, props, map symbols, and voice quality will not be used unless cumulatively the negative effect of a poor performance in any of these areas compels the conclusion that the candidate has completely failed to communicate his or her message.

Grades will be awarded in each of the four categories on a scale of 4.0, as follows (revised October 2006 – addition of a 1.5 grade and a revision to grade descriptions):

- 4.0 Exceptional
- 3.5 Superior
- 3.0 Above minimum requirements
- 2.5 Passing
- 2.0 Below minimum requirements
- 1.5 Inferior
- 1.0 Completely Unsatisfactory

Each reviewer will submit a grade in each category. The grades given by all members will be averaged by the Chairperson. A candidate must score at least a 2.5 average in each category in order to succeed on the examination.

**4. Fees**

Please see fee schedule.

**5. Notification**

1) Successful applicants will be notified by letter. In addition, they will be sent a press release from Society headquarters for possible use. Successful candidates may move their AMS Seal from station to station without further application to the Society. Relocation from a national (for example, CNN or The Weather Channel) to a local appearance, as well as relocation to a different country, however, requires the submission of a new tape (but no additional fee) for review by the Board Chair in accordance with the four stated criteria. Successful candidates will be informed both of their right to use the AMS Seal and of any limitations that the Society may impose upon such use.

2) Unsuccessful applicants will be notified by letter from the Secretary–Treasurer of the Society. The letter shall contain a statement from the Chairperson of the Commission, explaining the failure and suggesting ways of improving the performance based upon the information received from Board members. Unsuccessful applicants may reapply after a period of three months from the date of the negative notification. Please see the attached schedule for applicable fees. After a second unsuccessful application, there will be a one-year waiting period before a third application can be submitted. However, if more than two (2) years have passed from the date of the negative notification on the applicant's initial application, then the second application shall be deemed a new application.

Unsuccessful candidates may appeal the negative decision of the Board of Broadcast Meteorology to the Executive committee of the Society within 90 days of the date of notification. Please see attached schedule for applicable fees.

## **6. Procedures for recognition of continuing professional development**

One of the purposes of the Seal of Approval program is to provide an incentive for the continued professional growth of the meteorologist. In September 2003, the AMS Council approved the addition of a mandatory continuing professional development component for all of the Society's certification programs to be administered by each program's respective Boards. The procedures for submitting professional development activities to satisfy the requirements under the Seal of Approval program are provided below.

The Program to Recognize Continuing Professional Development is based on the development and maintenance of a "Professional Portfolio" by each individual Sealholder. A Professional Portfolio consists of an extensive list of activities and accomplishments related to an individual's professional career. This list was developed from input submitted by the Sealholder community. Each activity is assigned a Professional Development Score (PDS). To maintain active status, a Sealholder has to amass a total of 28 PDS points in a portfolio of continuing professional development during a five-year period, which must be submitted no later than the end of the fifth calendar year after the year in which the Sealholder received his or her certification or the year of the most recent submission of his or her portfolio.

The list of recognized professional activities and their PDS values is provided in the Table 1 (<http://www.ametsoc.org/amscert/cbmpointstable.cfm>). A Sealholder can review or update his or her portfolio by logging onto the AMS Web site (<http://www.ametsoc.org/PDTS/>) using the username and password created in the Sealholder's AMS membership profile. This Web site will allow the Sealholder to update his or her portfolio by filling in the appropriate cells on a preformatted form. To protect client confidentiality, specifics of many activities will not be required. Each Sealholder should keep personal records, however, that will provide tangible evidence of accomplishments in case their records are selected for audit. Sealholders who do not have ready access to the Internet can file a paper copy of the portfolio information form with the AMS Manager of Marketing and Special Programs. AMS Headquarters staff will then enter it into the portfolio database.

Each activity listed must have occurred within the last five years. The portfolio database will be maintained at the AMS Headquarters. When a Sealholder wishes to have his/her portfolio evaluated to fulfill the five-year professional development requirement, he/she initiates the submission of the current portfolio through the AMS Web site. Each portfolio will be confidential. Only the filing Sealholder, the Chair of the Broadcast Board or designee, and appropriate AMS Headquarters staffers will have access to an individual portfolio (except in the case where a Sealholder seeks an appeal). The submission of portfolios will be an automated process adding an additional level of security to the portfolios.

The portfolio Web site will, for each Sealholder logging into his or her portfolio, include a running total of the number of PDS points accumulated since the Sealholder's certification was granted or the most recent submission of the portfolio. After a successful submission — that is, one with a portfolio containing at least 28 PDS points accumulated in the past five years — a new, clear, portfolio will be initialized and the date for the five-year professional development period will be reset.

### Audits

No less than 5% of the portfolios submitted each year will be objectively chosen to be audited as a means of evaluating the program.

In addition, an audit of a Sealholder's portfolio may also be requested, with cause stated, by any member of the Society in writing to the Chair of the Commission on Professional Affairs, who may summarily dismiss a frivolous request with notice and a statement of reasons to the individual making the request.

Either of the audits described above will consist of requesting the audited Sealholder to provide documentation of his or her portfolio's contents, which will be reviewed by the Board Chair or board member designated by the chair. If, in the opinion of the Chair of Broadcast Meteorology, no aspects of the portfolio show cause for concern, the audit will be recorded as a pass and the Sealholder will be notified of such. If, after review of the documentation of the portfolio, the Board Chair finds cause for concern on any aspect of the portfolio, the Chair will notify the audited Sealholder of the nature of the concern and the audited Sealholder will have 30 days to respond with additional information or documentation as appropriate. The Board of Broadcast Meteorology then will review the portfolio as well as the response of the audited Sealholder and render a decision by majority vote within 60 days. If the Board decides that the Sealholder has not passed the audit, the Board will declare the Sealholder to be Inactive. The Sealholder may appeal the Inactive status as provided for in these procedures.

**7. Maintaining the list of acceptable continuing professional development activities**

The list of recognized professional activities and their PDS values provided in Table 1 will be reviewed at least annually by the Broadcast Board Chair for its relevance to the normal activities of a Sealholder, and revisions will be made as appropriate. Any active Sealholder can send a request to the Board Chair to have a specific activity considered for inclusion on the list or for the PDS point value of an existing activity. Each such request will be vetted by the Board of Broadcast Meteorology, who may seek external review and recommendation as it feels appropriate, and a decision on each suggested change will be made by majority vote of the Board. When a rule change is made, the Sealholder will be given the benefit of either the old or new rule as long as the activity was carried out prior to the end of the calendar year in which the change was made.

**8. Portfolio evaluation during the transition period**

An individual who received Seal status prior to 1 January 2004 must submit his or her portfolio of continuing professional development by 1 January 2009 to retain active status. Current Sealholders are encouraged, however, to have their portfolio evaluated as soon as possible. The number of points required for the initial portfolio submission by those who received their Seal prior to 1 January 2004 will be prorated according to the following schedule:

<u>Portfolio submission</u>	<u>PDS points required</u>
1 January 2002 – 1 January 2006	10
1 January 2002 – 1 January 2007	16
1 January 2002 – 1 January 2008	22
after 1 January 2008	28

Any individual who receives a Seal of Approval after 1 January 2004 is required to submit his or her portfolio of continuing professional development by the end of the fifth calendar year after the year the Seal was granted in order to retain active status. Thus, any individual obtaining the Seal of Approval in calendar year 2004 must submit his or her portfolio by the end of calendar year 2009, and similarly for subsequent years.

**9. Renewal, Inactive status, and reactivation**

Certification is for a period of one year, and can be renewed annually. Please see the attached schedule for applicable fees. Renewals are billed by the AMS in conjunction with annual membership and subscription notices. If an individual fails to renew certification within 6 months of the expiration date or fails to achieve an acceptable level of continuing professional development during the five-year period following certification or the completion of the most

recent continuing professional development period, the certification will be considered Inactive. In addition, a Sealholder who has been off-air for more than 5 years will be considered Inactive.

Inactive Sealholders cannot practice as Sealholders or market/promote themselves as Sealholders. Those wishing to acknowledge their past active Sealholder status in resumes may do so, but must list the years from initial certification to when they lapsed into Inactive status.

Reactivation of an Inactive certification can be obtained under the following situations:

- 1) If the certification has become Inactive due to failure to pay the renewal fee, and has been Inactive for less than five years, active status can be obtained by paying the renewal fee for the Inactive year(s) and the current renewal. If it has been Inactive for five years or more, the individual is required to submit a new tape (but no additional fee) for review by the Board Chair in accordance with the above four stated criteria.
- 2) If the certification has become Inactive because insufficient continuing professional development activities had been completed in the required five-year continuing professional development period, and the certification has been Inactive for less than three years, the certification can be reactivated upon completion of sufficient continuing professional development activities in the five year period preceding the request for reactivation and with the payment of the renewal fee for the Inactive year(s) and the current renewal. If it has been Inactive for three years or more, the individual is required to submit a new tape (but no additional fee) for review by the Board Chair in accordance with the above four stated criteria.
- 3) If the individual has become Inactive due to a failure to hold an on-air position for more than five consecutive years, he/she must submit a new tape (but no additional fee) for review by the Board Chair in accordance with the above four stated criteria.

#### **10. Appeal of Inactive status**

A Sealholder whose certification has become Inactive through any means other than nonpayment of the renewal fee, including as the result of a review of his or her portfolio of continuing professional development, may seek an appeal of the Inactive status by written request to the Chair of the Commission on Professional Affairs within 90 days of notification of placement on the Inactive Sealholder list. The request for appeal should include all supporting documentation needed to review the request. In cases of extenuating circumstances beyond the control of the Sealholder (such as a military reservist being called to active duty) the Chair of the Commission on Professional Affairs may grant an extension of active status for a one-year period. Economic hardship is not grounds for appeal by a Sealholder that has been moved to Inactive status.

A Sealholder whose appeal of Inactive status has been denied by the Chair of the Commission on Professional Affairs may, within 90 days of notification of the denied appeal, appeal that action in writing to the Executive Committee of the Society (see Organizational Procedures of the AMS).

#### **11. Publication of Seal status**

While the individual professional portfolios will be confidential, the AMS Web site will post a list of all Sealholders and their current status as "Active" or "Inactive". Each status type will be clearly defined.

#### **12. Suspension or revocation**

- 1). The AMS reserves the right to suspend or revoke the right to use the Seal of Approval if a sealholder, in the conduct of his or her profession, clearly fails to conduct himself or herself in

a manner that reflects the dignity and honor of the profession or if a sealholder fails repeatedly to adhere to the four criteria for the award of the seal set out in Section IV.

- 2). Any complaint that may be grounds for suspension or revocation of the Seal under Section 1) shall be sent to the Secretary–Treasurer of the Society. The Secretary–Treasurer may summarily dismiss a frivolous complaint with notice and a statement of reasons to the complainant. Otherwise, the Secretary–Treasurer shall send a copy of the complaint to the Chairperson of the Commission on Professional Affairs, the Chairperson of the Board of Broadcast Meteorology, and the sealholder.
- 3) The Chairperson of the Board of Broadcast Meteorology may resolve any complaint by any appropriate informal means, which may include contacting the sealholder in question in an effort to resolve by mutual agreement the subject of the complaint.
- 4) Any complaint not disposed of by informal means shall be determined as follows:
  - a. With the concurrence of the Chairperson of the Commission on Professional Affairs, a copy of the complaint shall be sent to the sealholder in question by the Board Chairperson, together with a copy of Section VII constituting the procedure for suspension or revocation of the Seal of Approval and the names and brief descriptions of the members of a Fact-Finding Panel appointed under Sub-Paragraph 2.
  - b. The Board Chairperson shall select three members of the Board, who will constitute a Fact-Finding Panel to determine the issues raised in the complaint. Each member of the Fact-Finding Panel shall certify to the Chairperson that he or she is aware of no conflict of interest in accepting the appointment to the Fact-Finding Panel. The sealholder in question shall have the opportunity within 15 days of the date of notification to object to any member of the Fact-Finding Panel. The sealholder shall be required to state in writing the reasons for any objection to a member of the panel. The Chairperson may either accept the objection from the sealholder or refer the question to the Chairperson of the Commission on Professional Affairs for final decision.
  - c. The sealholder shall cooperate fully with the Fact-Finding Panel and produce any tangible information relevant to the issues raised in the complaint and shall attempt to secure for the Fact-Finding Panel copies or recordings of any weathercast in issue. The sealholder may submit to the Fact-Finding Panel any other information he or she deems relevant, including copies or recordings of other weathercasts and a written answer to the complaint.
  - d. After the submission of the tangible evidence to the Fact-Finding Panel, if any facts remain in dispute, a hearing shall, upon written request of the sealholder, be held by the Fact-Finding Panel upon adequate notification to the sealholder and at a time and place convenient to the members of the panel and the sealholder. The hearing shall be conducted according to fundamental concepts of due process recognized as fair and followed by administrative agencies in the conduct of adjudicatory hearings, which shall include the right to counsel, presentation of witnesses, right to cross-examination, and the right to record the proceeding by either stenographic or tape-recording means. Strict rules of evidence shall not apply, but the panel shall accept information or evidence that is customarily relied upon by reasonable people in the conduct of serious affairs.
  - e. The Fact-Finding Panel shall make written findings of fact and shall determine if the sealholder has, in the conduct of his or her profession, clearly failed to conduct himself or herself in a manner that reflects the dignity and honor of the profession, or if the sealholder has failed repeatedly to adhere to the four criteria for the award of the Seal of Approval as set out in Section IV.

If the Fact-Finding Panel determines that the sealholder has failed in his or her conduct or adherence to the criteria as aforesaid, then the Fact-Finding Panel shall include in its written decision its findings on the degree of severity of the matter and a recommendation for the imposition of sanctions, which may include:

- i. a written informal admonition by the Chairperson of the Commission on Professional Affairs, a copy of which shall be retained in the sealholder's personal file; or
  - ii. a suspension of the sealholder's right to use the Seal of Approval for a period of time; or
  - iii. a revocation of the sealholder's Seal of Approval.
- f. The written decision of the Fact-Finding Panel shall be sent to the Chairperson of the Board of Broadcast Meteorology, the Chairperson of the Commission on Professional Affairs, and the sealholder. The Chairperson of the Board of Broadcast Meteorology and the Chairperson of the Commission on Professional Affairs, after a review of the decision, shall jointly determine in their judgment the appropriate sanction and administer the same.
5. A sealholder against whom action has been taken may, within 30 days of the date of notification of the action, appeal the action in writing to the Executive Committee of the Society (see Organizational Procedures of the AMS).

## **REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AMS SEAL OF APPROVAL PROGRAM**

Applications for the AMS Seal of Approval Program will be accepted until 31 December 2008. After that date, only applications for the AMS Certified Broadcast Meteorologist Program will be accepted.

In order to be eligible to apply for the AMS Seal of Approval, applicants must meet the requirements listed under one of the below sections.

**(A)** Hold a Bachelor's (or higher) degree in meteorology or atmospheric science.

**(B)** Hold a Bachelor's degree (or higher) in "other sciences and engineering" and be engaged in an activity in which the applicant's knowledge is being applied to the advancement or application of the atmospheric or related sciences. Acceptable degrees will be determined after a review of the applicant's college/university transcripts. Arts and humanities are not included; therefore, degrees in English, literature, philosophy, languages, journalism, communications and business administration would not lead to eligibility for Seal application. In addition to a degree in a related science, applicants must also have completed at least 12 semester credit hours in meteorology with 8 of the 12 credits in core classes (a minimum of 2 credits in each of 3 of the 5 core areas is required). See (C) for a description of the core areas.

**(C)** This set of requirements is intended to recognize individuals without a degree from an accredited institution but who have at least a minimal educational background in the underlying science and substantial experience in the field. Individuals accepted under this category must have at least 20 semester credit hours in meteorology with 12 of the 20 credits in core classes (a minimum of 2 credits in each of 4 of the 5 core areas is required). In addition, applicants must have 3 out of the last 5 years experience in the field. This requirement must be fulfilled by experience that requires independent analysis, interpretation and scientific judgment. It may not be fulfilled by experience that involves nothing more than routine observations or passing on information created by someone else.

The following criteria will be used to determine the types of courses which count towards the required 20 semester hours:

1. Courses in meteorology or atmospheric sciences, climatology, oceanography or hydrology which are part of a curriculum leading to a Bachelor of Science degree in atmospheric or related oceanic or hydrologic sciences at an accredited institution.
2. Courses in atmospheric or related sciences designed to fulfill a science elective requirement for a non-science major that are offered by a department of atmospheric or related oceanic and hydrologic sciences and the entire course concerns atmospheric or related oceanic or hydrologic sciences.
3. Courses offered through a geography or earth sciences department when it is clear that they are science based and the entire course deals with the atmospheric or related oceanic and hydrologic sciences.
4. Correspondence courses that are accepted by accredited institutions toward a Bachelor of Science in the atmospheric or related oceanic and hydrologic sciences.

At least 12 of the 20 credits must be in areas of:

1. Atmospheric or Oceanographic Dynamics
2. Atmospheric or Oceanographic Thermodynamics
3. Physical Meteorology or Physical Oceanography
4. Synoptic Meteorology (or Weather Systems) or Synoptic Oceanography

## 5. Hydrology

A minimum of two credits in each of 4 of the 5 areas is required. These core courses must include basic processes relevant to atmospheric or oceanic systems. Thus, for instance, in the area of dynamics the fundamentals (the balance of forces for motions of the atmosphere or ocean) must be covered. Representation using calculus is desirable but not required, but such coverage must not be purely descriptive. Dynamics at the level covered in textbooks for survey courses (such as *Atmospheric Science, An Introductory Survey* by Wallace and Hobbs) is sufficient provided a significant portion (generally more than half) of the course covers topics in dynamics. Similar comments apply to other such specific areas mentioned in the core requirements.