



**United States Department of the Interior
U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY**

Reston, Virginia 20192

In Reply Refer To:
Mail Stop 415

March 29, 2017

Memorandum

OFFICE OF SURFACE WATER TECHNICAL MEMORANDUM 2017.09

SUBJECT: OSW Policy for Required Surface Water Station Documents in the Gage Shelter

The purpose of this memo is to establish minimum requirements for station documents to be stored in the gage shelter in paper form.

Beginning March 29, 2017, all gage shelters are required to contain station documentation as specified in this memo. Additional documents (historically stored in the shelter) can be maintained at the discretion of the Water Science Center (WSC).

Background

The Office of Surface Water (OSW) historically has required that WSCs store specific station documents in the gage shelter for purposes of adequate gage operation and personnel safety; some WSCs also store other documents they find useful for their field personnel. In 2012, OSW released the computer program AutoFF, which automatically consolidates available electronic station records into an electronic field folder that can then be synced to field devices. AutoFF is designed to:

- Ensure field staff has access to the latest station information at all times;
- Provide the information in an easy to read and transportable electronic format;
- Eliminate the inefficiency of hand producing, collecting, and distributing numerous paper documents; and
- Facilitate the efficient sharing of station material with hydrographers from other WSCs, discipline office reviewers, cooperating agencies, or other non-WSC personnel visiting a station.

While the use of AutoFF is not mandatory, many WSCs across the country have adopted the tool and have reduced (or in some cases eliminated) paper documents that historically were stored in the gage shelter. Prior to release of this memo, decisions about storage of paper documents in the gage shelter were made at the discretion of each WSC.

Statement of OSW Policy

This policy establishes minimum requirements for paper documentation in the gage shelter where an electronic station-documents tool (AutoFF or other tool supported by the Water Mission Area) has been deployed, and reiterates minimum requirements for sites where AutoFF is not in use.

Electronic station-documents tool deployed

While most USGS staff (and many cooperators) have access to current station documents in electronic form, there may be times (flooding, emergency maintenance, etc.) when authorized personnel need to access a USGS gage shelter without electronic station information readily available; those personnel may need to check or reset gages at the site, make a discharge measurement, or perform maintenance. For any of these activities those personnel need to have knowledge of reference and recording gage instrumentation, recommended measuring equipment and measurement locations, and any safety issues at the site.

To ensure such visits are safe and effective, the following paper documents must be stored in the gage shelter at all times:

- A recently updated (within 1 year) station description that contains current information about gage infrastructure (including reference gage, auxiliary gage(s), and recording gage(s)), reference mark locations and elevations, maximum safe wading stage and preferred locations for discharge measurements, and typical instrumentation configurations used for measurements; and
- An up-to-date, site-specific Site Hazard Analysis (as archived in the USGS Site Information Management System), along with all safety documents applicable to the site (traffic control plan, cableway safety inspection form, etc.).

Additional paper documentation may be stored in the gage shelter at the discretion of the WSC. Visit logs (9-207 format) and site sketches are useful for anyone accessing a USGS streamgage—maintenance of electronic and/or paper visit logs and site sketches is encouraged.

Electronic station-documents tool not used

At sites where AutoFF is not used, existing OSW requirements for maintenance of station documentation remain in effect. As such, the following paper documents must be stored in the gage shelter at all times:

- A current station description that contains up-to-date information about gage infrastructure (including reference gage, auxiliary gage(s), and recording gage(s)), reference mark locations and elevations, maximum safe wading stage and preferred locations for discharge measurements, and typical instrumentation configurations used for measurements;
- An up-to-date, site-specific Site Hazard Analysis (as archived in the USGS Site Information Management System), along with all safety documents applicable to the

- site (traffic control plan, cableway safety inspection form, etc.);
- Current rating table (expanded format); and
- Site visit log (9-207 formats).

Additional paper documentation may be stored in the gage shelter at the discretion of the WSC. Site sketches are useful for anyone accessing a USGS streamgage – maintenance of up-to-date site sketches is encouraged.

Summary

This policy memorandum establishes minimum requirements for station documents that must be stored (paper form) in all USGS gage shelters. The policy is effective as of March 29, 2017 and does not supersede any previous policy statement.

Robert R. Mason, Jr.
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