

Summary of 17 December 2020 NWS Baltimore/Washington Aviation Users Forum

--Presenter: Andrew Snyder, NWS LWX Aviation Program Leader

Attendance:

Non-NWS:

Mark Yerges (Lead Met with Delta Airlines Met Dept), Bob Flynn (Director of Air Traffic Strategy United), Dewayne Vaughan (Potomac TRACON, NATCA safety rep), Laura Stensland (Deputy Director FAA OPS), John Kosak (National Business Aviation Association), Justin Jordan (DCA-Delta OPS), Keith Meurlin (Washington Airports Task Force), Jolene Berry (HEF OPS), Sandra Park (Mesa Airlines), Nathan Polderman (United Airlines OPS), Randy Horner (Potomac TRACON), Ashley Morley (ATCT/ADW)

NWS:

Andrew Snyder, Todd Baker, Dan Hofmann, Brendon Rubin-Oster, Chris Strong, Jim Lee, Jason Elliott, Jeremy Geiger, Ken Widelski, Kyle Pallozzi, Michael Souza, Rick Winther, Steve Zubrick, Cody Ledbetter

Action Items:

1. **Rick Winther to provide HEF mgmnt with contacts in FAA for submitting TAF request**
2. **Include link for comments to the new radar page.** (updated address provided 12/18/20 by C. Strong)

Meeting began at 1:01 PM EST.

Welcome: *James E. Lee, MIC/LWX*

1:05 PM: Introductions

1:10 PM: CWSU Updates: *Rick Winther, MIC, ZDC/CWSU Leesburg* (provided 1 slide)

- FAA/NWS finished negotiations on a new National Template for the Pre-Duty Weather Briefing (PDWB)
 - a. Stepped through example
 - b. Expected to go live January 1
- Created Tower-specific web briefings (https://www.weather.gov/zdc/PDWB_sites)
 - a. Contain new graphics specifically for each hazard, separated by tabs

(no comments on Rick's presentation)

1:20 PM: *Andrew* reviewed NWS Structure and LWX Aviation products

- Goals of forum and aviation users group
- NWS structure and mission
- WFO products: TAFs, aviation forecast discussion, local webpage, digital aviation services

(no comments)

1:25 PM: Aviation News Briefs (*Andrew*)

- Verification review
 - LWX typically exceeds national performance goals for IFR and lower conditions

- 18Z, 00Z TAFs more challenging due to convection; convection usually brings down scores over the warm season
- MRB, CHO typically more challenging due to local influence on fog, low clouds
- New “Pilot’s Guide to Aviation Weather Services”:
<https://www.weather.gov/media/aviation/A%20Pilots%20Guide%20to%20Aviation%20Weather%20Services.pdf>
 - Overview of available NWS weather tools for each stage of flying – preparation to en route
- National Blend of Models v4.0 recently released
 - Different methodologies for cloud base, visibility, LLWS
 - Bias correction techniques updated for probabilistic ceiling/visibility and winds
 - Improvements to sky cover in HRRR v4 should translate into NBM
 - *Nathan*: asked if we had developed any local thresholds for raw probabilities from the NBM for freezing rain, sleet, snow; United exploring if there are meaningful values. (*Steve*: We had not at LWX and noted that NBM 4.0 is a recent addition to our guidance suite. If models aren’t properly capturing sharp precip type transition, NBM won’t either – use caution on gradients.)
- DAS Availability
 - Graphical display version slipped in release, but data is technically downloadable from offices who send to the National Digital Forecast Database
- National program updates: Desire to address consistency with thunderstorms in the TAFs. IWXXM TAFs being issued in background now. TAFs will start to be sent out as a “collective” instead of individually by airport.
- LWX TAF Status: existing 6 TAFs remain same for now. Additional services could come down the road as digital aviation expands.
 - HEF requested TAF addition; remains under review. *Jolene* asked for status update/timeline.
 - *Jim* discussed FAA requirements; recommended HEF contact the FAA to advocate for TAF service.
 - **ACTION: Rick Winther to provide HEF mgmnt with contacts in FAA for submitting TAF request**

2:00 PM: Updated NWS TAF Policy Directive (*Andrew*)

- Updates to TAF structure
 - TEMPO groups allowed beyond the first 9 hrs
 - 8 line explicitly allowable (was 6 lines); and use is encouraged in 30hr TAFs
- Many points of emphasis (light wind direction, use of 3 frozen precip types, AWC/NAM collaboration, more specifically addressing *vicinity*) were a result of the 2019 forum. Does not address thunderstorm best practices or consistency yet.
- LLWS section expanded; more examples of when FM group should be added.
- From *Nathan*: FYI...FAA Policy Branch (ANG-C64) recently launched a "weather needs portal" where aviation stakeholders can submit requests for weather products & services:
<https://www.faa.gov/nextgen/programs/weather/suggestions/>

2:08 PM: Tropical Storm Isaias Case Study (*Andrew*)

- Overview of Isaias history and impacts during early August
- Low Level Wind Shear: review of directive and various discussions over the past decade about what qualifies as LLWS and how to forecast it; review of tools and models we currently have available.
- “Hit or miss” LLWS showed up in LWX TAFs during Isaias, brought to our attention by *Rick Curtis*/SWA. Likely an artifact of our tool calculating directional shear due to offset between NWS surface wind vortex center and the vortex center aloft in the NAM model.
- Summarized how (non-convective) LLWS is probably the least understood/grasped aspect in aviation meteorology; asked if the group had any tips, recommendations, or important thresholds.
 - *No comments*

2:25 PM: Review of [Action Items from 13 Nov 2019 LWX Aviation Users Meeting](#) (*Andrew*)

- *John Kosak*: Would be happy to outreach to his groups (FBO, etc.) for allowing LWX access on future outreach visits to HEF. Can discuss why having a TAF at HEF would be beneficial to the business jet community. Definitely can be differences in weather from IAD.
 - [SEA - ZSE Model VWP \(weather.gov\)](#) updated link for VWP/LLWS profiles

2:39PM: Open Forum Session

- *John Kosak*: Question: re: 16 Dec 2020 winter storm. Is there a specific location within the NWS that would have “big picture”/regional information on major winter storms, similar to the National Hurricane Center?
 - *Andrew/Steve/Mark/Brendon* suggested some Weather Prediction Center products, heavy snowfall discussion (<https://www.wpc.ncep.noaa.gov/discussions/qpfhsd.html>)
 - *John*: Confidence and timing are what’s really needed
 - *Nathan*: <https://www.aviationweather.gov/fcstdisc>; <https://www.aviationweather.gov/decisionsupport/winterdashboard>; something in a WSSI color-coded impact format could be really useful for aviation
 - *Rick*: CWSU can add winter accumulation graphics to tower briefing pages to allow “regional” picture
- *Nathan*: new NWS radar page...animation is not very good
 - *Jim*: Others have noted. Please provide direct feedback.
 - Tutorial: <https://www.weather.gov/ctp/newRadarTutorial>
 - **ACTION: Include link for comments to the new radar page:** nwsradarfeedback@noaa.gov
- *Chris*: I looked into WAVE (Weather Archive and Visualization Environment) further. It is behind the NWS firewall, and can only be accessed by NWS employees.
- *Dewayne*: PCT can concur with the difference in potential TAF between HEF and IAD. Wind and visibility can be very different. And thank you for the modifications to the pre-duty weather and compression information!
- New telephone number for LWX OPS: 571-888-3501
- *Post-meeting submission from Melissa Di Spigna, Eastern Region Aviation Meteorologist*: AWC will conduct additional TCF training this warm season given the success of 2020’s training

3:00 PM: Concluding Remarks

- *Andrew*: Thanks for participating; don’t hesitate to contact us.
- *Jim*: New LWX Aviation Program Leader next fall 2021 (Mike Souza); Jim recognized Andrew for his service as current Aviation Program Leader
- *Jim*: Hopefully next year, we can have in-person meeting again coinciding with Nov. A4A conference.

Adjourn: 3:02 PM