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Service Change Notice 15-26
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From: Eli Jacks
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Subject: Operational Implementation of Changes to "Forecast at a
Glance Icons" on NWS Point Forecast Pages effective
July 7, 2015

Effective July 7, 2015, at 1400 Coordinated Universal Time (UTC),
NWS will implement changes to the icons depicted on all of its
Point Forecast pages. An example of a current Point Forecast page
for Leesburg, VA, is below:

http://forecast.weather.gov/MapClick.php?x=212&y=89&site=lwx&zmx=1&zmy=1&map_x=212.1999969482422&map_y=88.73333740234375#.VC6mxBaS_1A

NWS is making these changes based on analysis of 6,700 comments collected following issuance of a Public Information Notice on February 27, 2014. Also, many of these changes are based on the results of a research project led by the National Center for Atmospheric Research (Demuth, Lazo, & Morss, 2012; Demuth, Morss, Lazo, & Hilderbrand, 2013).

Specifically, the following changes will be made:

1) We will use a new set of icon images, designed to be more visually discernible and specific. These new icons are depicted side-by-side with the current icons at:

<http://innovation.srh.noaa.gov/newicons/icons.html>

2) Currently, we show only one icon to cover each of nine, 12-hour periods out to 4.5 days. Under the new approach, icons will cover either 12-hour periods or dual, 6-hour periods when there are rapid changes in the weather. Examples of such rapid changes during 12-hour periods may include cases when morning rain gives way to afternoon sunshine or when precipitation changes from rain to snow overnight.

The four, 6-hour periods for possible use will start at 6 am, noon, 6 pm and midnight, all adjusted to local time. When dual icons are used within any given 12-hour period, the transition between them will be indicated by a vertical line.

3) When used, the dual icons will also feature new text phrases beneath them to concisely describe expected changes in the weather. To support this change, we will also adjust some of the phrases used beneath all 12-hour and dual icons. The link below provides a table depicting current phrases side-by-side with the new phrasing:

<http://www.weather.gov/eax/pointforecasttextphrase>

The link below offers examples of how the new dual icons, new text phrases and vertical lines will appear:

<http://www.weather.gov/eax/pointforecastdualimage>

4) When Watches, Warning and Advisories (WWA) are in effect, we will add color blocks around the icons to depict how long they will be in effect. Specifically, we will add yellow blocks for "Watches," red blocks for "Warnings" and orange blocks for "Advisories." These color blocks will be applied in two different ways according to the situation, as follows:

a) When one or more WWAs are in effect "NOW" (i.e., at the time the user clicks), we will add a new color block as the left-most icon. In these cases, we will also drop the right-most icon for 4.5 days in advance, and the icon for the period already underway will be moved to the right one position, becoming the second icon.

b) We will also use color blocks to indicate the full temporal extent of WWAs in effect out to 4.5 days (4 days if a "NOW" box is used). The length of the color blocks will match the length of time the associated WWA(s) is (are) in effect.

In both a) and b), we will add a new capability to allow users to fully identify the WWA(s) in effect, as well as its (their) duration. For the "NOW" block, users may click anywhere within the block to view this information. For all WWAs in effect "beyond NOW," users may click on the grey information icon (indicated by a circled, lower case "i") provided above the left-most icons.

Details on the methodology used for drawing the color blocks are provided at:

<http://www.weather.gov/eax/pointforecastheadlines>

5) When the forecast probability of precipitation changes by at least 30 percent during any 12-hour period, we will use dual icons and will also display an arrow between the 6-hour icons

depicting the change in probability. Examples of how the arrows will be depicted are provided at:

<http://www.weather.gov/eax/pointforecastvaryingpop>

Users can preview the new Point Forecast icons up until implementation on July 7, 2105. To access the new icons in real time, go to any Point Forecast Page and click on the banner at the top that reads "Preview NWS' New Point Forecast Icons." Doing so will provide information on how to access another page that will depict the new icons. The preview site is not operational so performance may be slow during periods of peak access.

The NWS continually looks for ways to improve its products and services. Partners and users are encouraged to provide comments regarding the new Point Forecast icons.

For more information or to provide comments, please contact:

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National Service Change Notices are online at:

<http://www.weather.gov/os/notif.htm>

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