Meeting Summary: 2024 NWS Baltimore/Washington Aviation Users Forum
November 25, 2024 1:00 PM - 2:50 PM

Attendees: Neil Brandt (FAA Potomac Tracon), Luke Dosier (Support Specialist FAA Dulles Tower), Steven Abbey (Controller at Dulles), Kory Gempler (FedEx Manager of Meteorology), John Stranahan (United Airlines), Jim Shacke (SOC Director at IAD), David Dillahunt (Southwest Airlines)

Mike Graf (NWS Aviation and Space Weather Services Branch), Andrew Snyder (Aviation Program Leader at WFO LWX), James Lee (Meteorologist in Charge at LWX), Brian LaSorsa (Science and Operations Officer at LWX), Christopher Strong (Warning Coordination Meteorologist at LWX), Erik Taylor (Meteorologist at LWX), Jeremy Geiger (Hydrologist at LWX), Brendon Rubin Oster (Lead Meteorologist at LWX), Connor Belak (Meteorologist at LWX), Chesnea Skeen (Meteorologist at LWX), Rick Winther (Meteorologist in Charge at ZDC CWSU), Todd Baker (Meteorologist at ZDC CWSU)

Presentations Here: 2024 Aviation Users Forum by Andrew Snyder: https://www.weather.gov/media/lwx/avnworkshop/2024%20Aviation%20Users%20Forum.pdf
Winter Weather Challenges for Aviation by Brian LaSorsa: https://www.weather.gov/media/lwx/avnworkshop/Winter%20Weather%20Challenges%20for%20Aviation.pdf

Meeting notes:

- Mike Graf mentioned that the Service Change Notice will be sent soon for aviation grids going operational in February 2025.
- David Dillahunt mentioned that start and end times are very important for operations and that they closely monitor our winter onset and end time graphics.
    - Question about time period represented in Snow Rate product (Response: max rate over 6 hour time steps)

PROB30 Feedback Session

- Mike Graf added that HQ is not picturing “plastering” the TAF with PROB30. Rather the aim is to provide more consistency, especially with the public forecast.
- David inquired about how VCTS will be used in the future. Will it go away entirely? Reason being is that 100 offices tend to be handling it differently. Said VCTS is helpful for planners at SWA as they put greater weight on it than PROB30 for fuel planning (similar to TEMPO). They consider PROB30 to be a low chance of something happening, while VCTS represents coverage.
    - Answer was that while we will be generally replacing the VCTS with PROB30, we will still have VCTS as a tool in the forecasters toolbox to use when storms will be in the vicinity of the airports. VCTS will most likely be used in situations where scattered storms are expected near the airports.

    - **Action:** NWS WFO LWX will save case studies over the next year and include them in the next meeting to solicit feedback.
    - **Action:** Mike Graf will work with Andrew to develop a one pager that explains PROB30 and VCTS to our users.
- Mike Graf noted from a national perspective, they want to dial back the use of VCTS. It's being used differently in different regions. Don't want it used for storms 40 miles out.
    - Bulk training has been sent to WFOs.
    - Encouraged the use of Slack to keep open communications with WFOs. If it doesn't make sense, ask.
    - Need feedback to improve products and consistency. Only comments so far were from the Boston area where some users did not like PROB30.

Open Forum Session

- Kory Gempler inquired about how we collaborate with CWSU. Memphis has a chat room with the WFO, CWSU, and airline partners that works well.
    - Answer from Rick, Todd, and Andrew is that it is mainly through internal Google chat that is initiated at times both by the WFO and CWSU. We have room to improve, but overall the ad hoc nature seems to work well.
    - David mentioned that WFO, CWSU, and airlines have chats together in the Dallas area as well, and that increases the visibility and transparency.
- Rick Winther mentioned that weather.gov/aviation/cwsu is a great website to get detailed information regarding the forecasts (briefings, forecasts, discussions, etc).
- Rick mentioned that CWSU and FAA have a contract through the remainder of FY25, so pre-duty weather briefings will continue. A team has been formed that may "reimagine" CWSUs and their products in the future. CWSU ZDC is currently fully staffed.
- Rick said they are continually incorporating feedback into PDWB content. They now include wind profiles for IAD and RDU based on TRACON feedback.
- Kory also mentioned that it is important to know how you are impacting users when writing TAFs. For example, airlines cannot take off in heavy snow or moderate/heavy sleet. They tell their meteorologists to forecast the weather, but know the user impact.
    - Andrew mentioned that we have trained on this topic in drills and workshops, and that this is a good idea to continue re-enforcing this.
    - Mike Graf asked if the restrictions relate to the observations or the TAFs. Kory noted that the official go/no-go is based on the observation, but that the TAFs affect planning and could have impacts through that.
    - Kory also noted that some airports have LWE (liquid water equivalent) equipment that can "override" the ASOS when it outputs higher intensities than supported by precipitation rates.
- Mike Graf noted an initiative for ice accretion grids that could help with deicing planning.

Appreciation extended to Brian LaSorsa for compiling the notes.