FAA-NWS Aviation Weather
Weather Policy and Product Transition Panel
Friends and Partners in Aviation Weather
October 22, 2014
Airplanes ... have changed.

Lockheed Constellation

Airbus A380
Aviation weather products ...

not so much.

Area Forecast 1965

Area Forecast 2013
Background

• Many NWS aviation weather products are decades old, with little change in format

• The Area Forecast (FA) is a prime example

• FAA and NWS have undertaken a review of all weather information produced by NWS for aviation purposes
Primary goals of the review, include:

- Improving NWS products, in-support of aviation weather;
- Increasing emphasis on digital products and looking for opportunities to digitize legacy NWS products and services;
- Identifying products and services with duplicative information;
- Identifying products and services that are of limited (dated) utility to operators; and
- Focusing activities of NWS forecasters to maximize operational benefit.
The Area Forecast (FA)

- Manually-generated text product (no graphical components)
- Forecasts VFR clouds and weather over 16 vast geographical areas:
  - CONUS (6)
  - Hawaii (1)
  - Alaska (7)
  - Gulf of Mexico (1)
  - Caribbean (1)
- Issued 3-4x daily, valid 18hrs (12hr + 6hr categorical outlook)
- Character-limited
- Variations date back as far as the 1930s; current version unchanged since the early 1990s
Geographical Coverage of the FA
### Elements of the FA & Alternatives

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*6hr outlook (hrs 12-18)
Low-Level Significant Weather (SIGWX) Prognostic Chart

https://www.aviationweather.gov/progchart/low

**Guidance:** The SIGWX chart provides pilots with the ‘big picture.’ Cold, warm, occluded and stationary fronts are clearly depicted, along with areas of high and low pressure.

**Guidance:** Whereas SIGWX charts provide pilots with a big-picture, general depiction of the weather, NDFD provides much greater detail with finer time scales and finer areal depictions of weather. FAA and NWS are working to ensure the information in the NDFD is available through existing FAA pilot weather briefing sources. AWC is integrating this information with ADDS, so users are able to generate a weather briefing without the need to navigate multiple websites.
Cloud Top Height Model Forecast Graphic:
http://www.emc.ncep.noaa.gov/mmb/mmbpll/opsnam/

**Guidance:** The Cloud Top Height Model Forecast Graphic is a computer-generated forecast from one of many weather computer models used by the National Weather Service. The Cloud Top Height Forecast Graphic only indicates the highest cloud. In other words, if there are multiple cloud layers, this product will only provide the top of the highest cloud. It should be used in-conjunction with METARs and TAFs to assess the presence of low, medium or high clouds.

Cloud Top Height Model Forecast Graphic.
*National Center for Environmental Prediction (NCEP)*
Area Forecast Status Update

- FAA and NWS mapped alternative sources of information, to be used in-place of the FA
- Developed guidance document for using these alternatives, including examples
- Invited interested parties to submit comment
  - Notice in the Federal Register (FAA)
  - Public Information Statement (NWS)
  - Majority of comments in support of transition
- The Agencies are targeting mid 2015 for transition to alternative sources of information
- Initial change(s) will apply only to the CONUS and HI FAs
- AK, CB and GM FAs will be addressed at a later date
Questions or comments? Please contact:

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