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InFO

Information for Operators

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http://www.faa.gov/other_visit/aviation_industry/airline_operators/airline_safety/info

An InFO contains valuable information for operators that should help them meet certain administrative, regulatory, or operational requirements with relatively low urgency or impact on safety.

Subject: Retirement of the National Weather Service (NWS) Area Forecast (FA) for the Contiguous United States (CONUS)

Purpose: This InFO serves to inform industry of the NWS's plan to discontinue production of the FA for the CONUS and transition to the Graphical Forecast for Aviation (GFA).

Background: In May 2015, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) formally petitioned the NWS to cease production of textual FAs, contingent upon the provision of equivalent meteorological information in support of aviation. The intent of the FAA in retiring the FA and transitioning to the digital GFA is to allow the Aviation Weather Center (AWC) forecasters to focus their efforts on maximizing operational benefit to aviation users, resulting in improved weather information to decision-makers.

The majority of the weather elements contained in the FA are already available through other NWS products. To maintain continuity of service, the GFA will ensure the availability of equivalent information, in addition to adding graphical displays of the predominant weather, sky cover, and wind speed and direction. The AWC's GFAs will replace the textual FA only for the CONUS. The FA for Alaska, the Gulf of Mexico, Hawaii, and the Caribbean will remain unchanged.

Discussion: The GFAs are a set of web-based displays that provide observations and forecasts of weather phenomena critical for aviation safety. GFAs cover the CONUS from the surface up to 42,000 feet (ft) mean sea level (MSL). Wind, icing, and turbulence forecasts are available in 3,000-ft increments from the surface up to 18,000 ft MSL, and in 6,000-ft increments from 18,000 ft MSL to 42,000 ft MSL. Turbulence forecasts are also broken into low (below 18,000 ft MSL) and high (above 18,000 ft MSL) graphics. A maximum icing graphic and maximum wind velocity graphic (regardless of altitude) are also available. Multiple fields of interest are combined in categories that the user is able to select from the top-level "Weather" menu. Data is time-synchronized and available hourly from 14 hours prior, to 15 hours after a selected time. The data for each category is determined by the time period: observations (current time and the prior 14 hours) and forecasts (valid up to 15 hours in the future). All NWS products will be available during the transition period of three (3) months starting July 10th 2017. On October 10th 2017, the NWS will cease production of the CONUS text FAs.

Recommended Action: All users are encouraged to visit <http://www.aviationweather.gov/gfa> for detailed information on GFAs. After clicking the link, select "INFO" on the top-right corner of the map display. The next screen presents the option of selecting "Overview," "Products," or "Tutorial." Select the tab of interest to explore the enhanced digital and graphical weather products designed to replace the legacy FA.

Contact: Questions or comments regarding this InFO should be directed to the Future Flight Technologies Branch, AFS-430, at (202) 267- 8795.