

Subject: New Operational and Experimental Digital Forecast Elements

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NWS Global Announcement

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I am pleased to announce the Quantitative Precipitation Forecast (QPF), Sky Cover, and Snow Amount elements will become operational, and the Hazard element will become experimental in the National Digital Forecast Database (NDFD) on July 8, 2008. This completes the transition to operational status for all the original twelve baseline forecast elements in NDFD.

The table below describes availability for these four grids beginning July 8, 2008.

Element	CONUS	Puerto Rico/Virgin Islands	Hawaii	Guam	Alaska
QPF	To become operational	To become operational	To become operational	Not available	Not available
Snow Amount	To become operational	Not required	To become operational	Not required	Not available
Sky Cover	To become operational	To become operational	To become operational	To become operational	Not available
Hazard	To become experimental				

The QPF element has resulted in improvement for gridded verification of our forecasts and analysis capabilities at our WFOs. One customer noted, "From the graphical forecast, we get much more accurate prediction of rainfall, wind gusts, etc., than from any other source." The Sky Cover element has many applications but is especially important to aviation. A user of this grid explained, "I am a pilot and I use this tool more than anything else when I am concerned about conditions on the ground for takeoff or landing. Wind and sky conditions given graphically every three hours and updated hourly are excellent." Feedback from businesses which rely on the Snow Amount element have been advocates on its importance to their livelihood: "We are in the snow management industry and we use the information to prepare our troops and equipment. We then decide to run with a pre-treatment or wait it out for active or post treatments."

The Hazards element will contain all the active long-duration watches, warnings, and advisories and is the first element in NDFD to have one-hour temporal resolution (through 72 hours); for Day 4 and Day 5, the temporal resolution will be every 6 hours. The addition of

the hazards element to NDFD will benefit our diverse user community and help us further the mission of the NWS. Please encourage your customers to provide us feedback on this new element; the comment period will end on January 8, 2009.

I appreciate the effort made by every NWS forecaster to create quality forecasts for the NDFD. The forecasters are only part of the story. It takes the entire NWS team--programmers, web masters, data managers, electronic technicians, program managers, focal points, and many others--to support and deliver this service to customers for a wide variety of businesses, academic institutions, and other federal agencies.

More details on the NDFD are available at <http://weather.gov/ndfd/>.

--Jack