

TAF tune-up

BECMG TAF-savvy for November 5

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Here we go again. Pursuant to a new International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) requirement, the National Weather Service (NWS) is changing the Terminal Aerodrome Forecast (TAF) format. From November 5, 2008,

TAFs will include new data and time abbreviations. Moreover, the TAFs issued for 32 large airports in the United States—as well as overseas—will cover a 24-hour period. The rest of the United States' TAFs will cover a 24-hour forecast period.

ICAO says we need 30-hour coverage because of the growing number of long-haul flights. They reason that with many flights now lasting 14 hours or more,

there's a need for longer-range forecast guidance. While most of us don't make flights anywhere near this length, we still have to learn the new TAFs if we're to understand the valid times at the other 593 TAF sites. And student pilots will have to learn the new TAFs if they expect to pass knowledge exams.

It's all about time

The main thing to remember is that

only the valid dates and times are changed in the new TAFs. The abbreviations for weather phenomena, visibility, wind, and sky conditions stay the same as before.

You'll see the new valid dates and times in five places within the new TAFs. At each place, there will be a date/time group that identifies the forecast information by date as well as time—because the 30-hour TAF can cross over into a new day.

Here are some examples

Valid date. This is the third data entry in a TAF. The new TAF will say, for example, 2418/2524. This means that the TAF is valid from day 24 of the month at 1800Z to day 25 of the month at 2400Z.

FROM designator. Again, there will be a date and time identifier preceding the

New TAF Format

Effective 1800 UTC 5 November 2008

TAF
KXXX 241732Z **2418/2524** 11006KT 4SM-SHRA BKN030
FM **242300** 22006KT 3SM-SHRA OVC030 PROB30 **2504/2506** VRB20G35KT
1SM TSRA BKN015CB
FM 250600 250010KT 4SM-SHRA OVC050
TEMPO **2508/2511** 2SM-SHRA OVC030=

Valid date of TAF
24th at 1800 UTC through
25th at 2400 UTC

Date of PROB30 Group
25th at 0400 UTC through
25th at 0600 UTC

Date of FM Group
24th at 2300 UTC

Date of TEMPO Group
25th at 0800 UTC
through 25th at 1100 UTC