



Press release

USA chooses The Met. Office for ice advice

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Release number 413

The Met. Office is now providing accurate warnings of impending ice on roads thousands of miles away in the United States, thanks to the latest internet technology.

The Met. Office has provided the majority of local authorities across the UK with its OpenRoad service since 1987, using information from a network of sensors which line major roads, but now, following extensive tests, the service has gone live in Montana and is on trial in New Jersey, Kansas, Pennsylvania and Idaho.

So far trials carried out across eight sites in North America have shown the OpenRoad service to be 89.9% accurate on average, despite the absence of a local forecaster or any local knowledge.

The results put the reliability of the service on a par with The Met. Office's UK service, which is the most accurate on the market. The accuracy of UK OpenRoad forecasts peaked in December last year when the system forecast 92.9% of frosts, with a mere 9.1% of alerts recorded as false alarms.

Anthony Astbury, who heads up the Infrastructure Unit at The Met. Office, is delighted with the success of the trials and the Montana contract. He said: "Our objective is to move increasingly towards delivering forecasts via the internet. These trials and the subsequent contract have acted as a testbed for the new technology that we have developed to fulfil this objective."

"The experience has proven that this method of delivery is accurate and effective. What's more, increased automation means that forecasters have more time to talk directly to customers who need a greater level of support and advice."

Further developments to the OpenRoad service, unveiled at a series of symposia across the UK in June, include a system for communicating forecast updates. Developed for the nuclear power industry, RapidReach enables forecasters to communicate changes to customers instantaneously using a prerecorded message.

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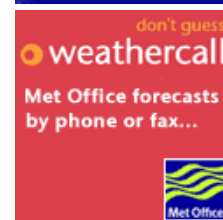
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