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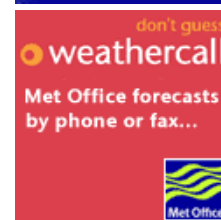
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The Met. Office engages in quest for better retail weather

12 June 2000

Release number 414

A new internet-based service that enables retailers to monitor in real time how weather affects their business is being unveiled by The Met. Office at this year's Retail Solutions 2000 at the NEC, Birmingham.

The new system, 'Engage™', enables retailers to compare sales figures at individual line level with Met. Office weather data, in order to make more-informed decisions about how past weather has affected stock levels, reordering, promotions and product placement.

The aim of Engage is to go beyond the simple delivery of weather information and provide retailers with an analysis of the impact of weather conditions on sales.

The service acts as a retailer's extranet, so directors and managers responsible for all aspects of retail operations can access relevant data for inclusion in reports and trading statements instantly. Engage will also allow users to isolate the impact of weather on business functions, such as sales or supply chain operations, through analytics, which will allow key weather thresholds to be identified across all product categories.

Further additions to Engage are already in development. A forecast planning service, to be launched by the end of the year, will enhance retail planning operations further by enabling the potential impact of weather to be accurately factored into the sales planning process.

Steve Speck, Retail Business Manager at The Met. Office, said: "Retailers are under tremendous pressure to continually improve the accuracy of their planning. Merchandise planning software is becoming increasingly sophisticated and reliable, however the effects of the weather are a variable that until now has not been completely harnessed."

"Through Engage, we aim to meet this challenge and provide retailers with a solution that answers the crucial questions of how, when and why weather affects the retail business. It will provide retailers with the ability to interrogate sales data using the highest quality weather information, and to enhance the quality of their sales forecasting process as a result."

Demonstrations of The Met. Office's new Engage merchandise planning system, which is driven by ArcIMS software provided by ESRI(UK), will take place on stand V60 at Retail Solutions 2000. Enquiries about the new service should be directed to Steve Speck on 0121 770 2932 or e-mail sales@meto.gov.uk.

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