

CHAPTER 14

SERVICES FOR RADIO AND TELEVISION

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CHAPTER 14

SERVICES FOR RADIO AND TELEVISION

14.1 Introduction

14.1.1 Radio and television provide the main source of weather information for the majority of the population since broadcasts are heard or seen by very large numbers of people. Live broadcasts by trained presenters comprise a well-established and much appreciated feature of national life and, as the 'voice' of the Office, play a very significant part in presenting our public image.

14.1.2 The market for weather information on radio and television is a very large, although slow and unpredictable. In television in particular the development of services in new areas presented by the growth of cable and satellite television provides both a challenge and a threat, as competitors also seek to take advantage of these new opportunities. The market may be divided into five main areas:

- a. BBC Radio
- b. Commercial Radio
- c. BBC Television
- d. Commercial Television

14.1.3 The importance of broadcasting and the need for coordination on a national scale make it essential for arrangements made with the various broadcasting organizations to be discussed fully with Headquarters. All proposals for new or substantially modified radio or television services in 14.1.2a and c must be referred to the BBC Account Manager for advice, but aspects under 14.1.2b/d should be referred to the Media Unit Manager or the IWP Sales Manager. Such discussion may well involve implications for staffing, particularly in the case of live television presentations which require major restructuring of work rosters, for training and for charging. In the light of the advice and except where the service includes the provision of data or graphics, detailed arrangements are normally left for discussion and agreement at local level.

14.1.4 BBC and commercial television and radio organizations are shown at Annexes A and B. Responsibilities for the provision of services or potential services to each radio and television station follow the principle that the responsible CS office is that in whose area of responsibility the studios of the television or radio station lie. This principle may not always be applied when new stations are set up. Current responsibilities are set out in Annex B to chapter 1. P and S Met Os and Commercial Managers at these offices are encouraged to establish and maintain close liaison with the BBC or commercial staff at stations within their areas of responsibility. Where such stations do not currently take a service from the Office, the objective of this liaison should be to influence them to do so, subject to satisfactory negotiation based on the charging principles set out in section 14.9. Where services are already provided, in many cases minor changes in schedule or content may be agreed and introduced locally without prior reference to Headquarters, though all instances should be notified subsequently by means of a full description of the change, including associated staff effort and charge, in the relevant Report of Work.

14.1.5 For services to the BBC (see sections 14.4 and 14.5) the information is required centrally for any national negotiation purposes. Notification of any changes should be made to the BBC Account Manager.

14.2 Style and presentation

14.2.1 Success or failure of communication with the public depends, on radio, on the choice of words and the manner in which they are used. See section 3.10 on 'the use of language'. On television the medium is primarily visual, the spoken word being secondary to the effective use of the symbol charts, graphics, etc. In a sense the two compete, as in the case of a caption chart which differs in detail from the words being read by an announcer off-screen. On both media, the difference between written and spoken English is fundamental. Well-written scripts designed to be read by an announcer would usually be inappropriate, and sound flat, if used by a forecaster; conversely, transcripts of really effective personal presentations, put over with all the nuances and correct stress that can come only from a professional who understands and has originated the material, look very odd in cold print and may be disastrous if read by an announcer. The style and approach of a presenter must also fit in with the style of the programme on which the broadcast takes place; there is a world of difference between a straight forecast on BBC Radio 4 and a chat with a 'DJ' on local radio.

14.2.2 When preparing scripts, word limitations should be scrupulously observed. If this is not done, there is always a risk that editing by a non-meteorologist to fit a time slot will alter the sense of the original. In some cases such editing occurs even though the word count has been observed. A clearly written script with emphasis on the important features at the beginning will minimize the impact of editing here. Repeated instances of such editing should be queried with the station locally. Prepared forms on which words are written in boxes or use of a word-processor's counting facility can assist, but a prepared script is not recommended when preparing personal presentations. If time permits a script should be read back as an announcer would read it. This allows accidental repetitions and infelicities of phrase to be corrected. Where forecasts cover a large geographical area which has to be sub-divided due to variations in the weather, it is important that the sub-divisions are clearly 'signposted' to avoid confusion.

14.2.3 Personal presentations are intended to be relaxed and informal as if talking from an armchair to a friend (but not a colleague!). This is in no sense an invitation to use sloppy syntax which is inexcusable, but rather a plea to be natural. Most regional accents are nowadays quite acceptable in moderation even when not native to the part of the country in which the audience resides, though problems still exist with certain 'big city' accents. On no account should any attempt be made to speak 'BBC English' which does not exist, though clear enunciation is important. Certain expressions have been defined as having particular meanings (see section 3.10) and should be used only in those senses, but with this reservation, the whole glory of the English language is available. The comments in section 3.9 should be heeded in relation to the use of meteorological jargon in particular. One of the great advantages of personal presentations is the opportunity given to put emphasis in the right place and to indicate degrees of confidence. In a situation where the guidance has suggested possible alternative developments or uncertainties of timing these can be put across properly. It is far better to do this than to sound equally confident in all situations which patently we are not. In broadcasts following a serious forecasting error, if time permits, a very brief explanation should be given (but see paragraph 4.2.7). Timing is of course all important and if a fixed time slot is allocated it should be used precisely, no more and no less. If possible, shortly before a broadcast, a forecaster should rehearse aloud what he intends to say, timing it carefully.

14.2.4 Broadcasts which are transmitted as part of a specialist programme (and have been authorized as appropriate) present a special challenge, since the presentation must be relevant and the contributor should be reasonably well informed about the subject in question, be it farming, continental travel, yachting or anything else. Local radio offers great opportunities to be parochial by mentioning familiar place names and current local events. The relevant people in the (CP) Branch will always give advice on farming matters (see also chapter 6) and Market Sector Managers will give or obtain advice on other topics when necessary. Comment should be strictly confined to meteorological matters and great care should be exercised not to stray into other areas which are not our responsibility. Specifically, although reference to heavy or prolonged rainfall is in order, great care should be taken when referring to flooding, which is the responsibility of Water Authorities and the Storm Tide Warning Service because non-meteorological factors are also involved. Similarly during FMD outbreaks, references to wind, precipitation, etc. are in order, but there must be no comment whatever about the possible spread of the virus which is a matter for MAFF officers.

14.2.5 The key feature of personal presentations on television is to remember that it is a visual medium and to relate effectively with both the graphical facilities and the camera. Facial expression is important; the presenter has to show that they believe in the forecast (commitment) and it helps to smile occasionally! Use of the hands can be another pitfall. These are areas where training is important, and this is usually provided by the television company. A limited amount of training for both radio and television work is included in some of the professional courses at The Meteorological Office College, while external training is arranged for those who demonstrate potential.

14.2.6 The style and content of television presentations is very much determined by the type of programme of which the weather may be a part and the graphical facilities which may be available. Graphics design is mainly the prerogative of the television company who may well have professionals employed in this area. Television presentation and graphics staff are always interested in new ideas which might have visual impact. New concepts such as the use of computer graphics facilities to display the sequence of actual and forecast weather require considerable planning and resources on both sides. Every opportunity should be taken to encourage interest in such improvements and to acquaint producers with the facilities that the Office can provide. In particular, with regard to non-BBC TV services, IWP are to be involved in discussions at an early stage.

14.3 Graphics

14.3.1 The use of graphics, as an aid to presentations on television, goes back a long way. Its purpose always, is to create impact and thus provides the viewer with a good recall of the information given. Synoptic charts were a feature of early experimental broadcasts before the Second World War on BBC Television. The latest ideas combine the data

and imagery available from numerical forecast models, satellites and radar with display hardware of considerable sophistication typified by the tailored system on BBC national television presentations, and of products used on the ITV National Weather and some regions. These products are all the result of collaboration between The Met. Office and graphics teams, using the sophisticated hardware available, and presented in the manner required by the client.

14.3.2 The flexibility of our approach is essentially in catering for the differing needs of TV companies. Our services to them can vary from simple caption charts and scripts on fax to presented programmes of fully animated graphics from a studio which may be external to the TV company. This presents a formidable challenge to our sales and production teams. At regional level the emphasis of presentation remains on local detail and individual styles, and at national and international level on trends, general development and the use of numerical forecast data over wide geographical areas.

14.3.3 All questions related to the technical aspects of television graphics and communication systems should be directed to the Media Unit Manager, IWP, at the London Television Centre, tel. 0171 827 7646.

14.4 Services for BBC and Independent radio

14.4.1 Forecasts for Radio 1, 2, 3 and 4 for the whole of the United Kingdom are provided under the Public Met Service. The service for Radio 5 Live is provided by a met. unit at Broadcasting House, using a contract meteorologist and staff from London Weather Centre.

14.4.2 Routine live broadcasts are made by the staff at the BBC Weather Centre for Radio 3 and 4. LWC staff may occasionally be called on to comment on weather features of particular interest. Such presentations do not require headquarters' approval where comment is restricted to current weather (see paragraph 19.2.6.1) but advice should be sought from the Senior Forecaster in CFO as necessary and the Press Officer subsequently informed (preferably in writing).

14.4.3 Scripted forecasts and live presentations for BBC Radio Scotland, Wales/Cymru and Northern Ireland are provided by Glasgow and Cardiff WCs, and M Met O Belfast respectively.

14.4.4 Scripted forecasts for BBC and commercial local radio are provided as copy from those provided to BBC regional television; any additional scripted forecasts for BBC and commercial local radio stations will be provided by the offices designated in Annex B to chapter 1. Staff at these offices may also make live or prerecorded broadcasts, using microphones and dedicated lines provided by the broadcasting authority concerned or by telephone as may be arranged locally. Increasingly, these broadcasts can take the form of an informal discussion between the presenter and forecaster, and a useful rapport can be developed. Also, care needs to be exercised since the forecaster should not become involved with lengthy, informal chats on air which detract from other repayment services. Most broadcasts on local radio should be of a duration of one minute or less.

14.4.5 CFO are responsible for any broadcasts required on the BBC Radio World Service which can cover meteorological features of note around the world. All requests for information about world weather should be directed to CFO.

14.4.6 Services to radio stations include the provision of FLASH weather messages (see section 14.8).

14.4.7 The BBC Travel Centre receives road danger warnings as indicated in section 17.8.

14.4.8 Services to BBC Radio 4 for mariners are described in chapter 18 and include the 'BBC shipping forecast', inshore waters forecast and gale warnings. In addition the Small Craft Warning Service is provided to BBC and Independent local radio stations.

14.5 Services for BBC Television

14.5.1 Personal presentations on BBC national television are made by staff at the BBC Weather Office, Television Centre. This office is equipped with facilities for the normal reception of charts, satellite images as well as certain other material (e.g. Synoptic Reviews). Routine telephone conferences are held with Senior Forecasters at CFO and LWC. Input to these conferences and thence to the national presentations from other WC forecasters is facilitated through the medium of local conferences and the routine twice daily conferences between senior forecasters at M Met Os and CFO (see chapter 5). These conferences are vital to the provision of services to BBC Television. The immediacy of current 'daytime' presentations is enhanced by the transmission to the TV 'Weatherman' by facsimile or telex of items of local weather interest (extremes etc.) from the outstations.

14.5.2 A major feature of the presentations on BBC national television is the use of computer graphics. These include sequences of forecast isobaric patterns, temperatures, winds, cloud and rainfall, together with satellite and radar imagery. Both the imagery and the forecast model output are derived from data, as arranged by the S&B(PD) Branch and transmitted routinely to the BBC from COSMOS by dedicated circuits. The Weathermen are able to superimpose frontal patterns and derive symbol and caption charts for a variety of areas. Facilities also include the display of charts or 'league tables' showing recent or current climatological data.

14.5.3 Forecast data from both the fine- and coarse-mesh models are transmitted to the BBC, the latter routinely containing charts for many days ahead. The display of such charts is a regular feature of the weekly forecast in *Country File* shown at 1255 LCT on Sundays and at 1325 LCT on Wednesdays on BBC1, and at 1956 LCT on Saturdays on BBC2. The Weatherman may use any chart to describe the weather and its likely changes. Charts further ahead than 3 days are not used routinely except as above; broadcasts at 2125 LCT routinely describe the weather up to three days ahead. In all cases, care needs to be exercised that the use of a longer period forecast chart does not detract (or distract) from the shorter period information being put across if that is the primary purpose of the broadcast.

14.5.4 In addition to making personal presentations on BBC Television channels 1 and 2 the duty Weatherman also records presentations for other companies. They make such presentations through BBC Enterprises in conjunction with the BBC Account Manager. The Weatherman ensures the BBC has all FLASH messages and severe weather warnings (section 14.8) promulgated. They will meet reasonable requests for non-scheduled broadcasts concerning current weather.

14.5.5 Designated offices provide forecast services for BBC regional television. In most cases scripts are supplied to be read by an announcer off-screen, or a regional newsreader. Where the BBC region employs a free-lance presenter, briefing facilities and/or data may be provided. In certain BBC regions, forecasters at the designated office make personal presentations from a the BBC television studio or from the Weather Centre. Arrangements, including the selection and training of suitable staff (subject to the approval of the BBC region) for all these presentations, will be made by HQ in consultation with the appropriate Officer-in-Charge and with the assistance as necessary of the Senior Weatherman at BBC Television Centre.

14.6 Services for ITV

14.6.1 Services for ITV National Weather Services from the London Television Centre to the ITV network are provided by presenters and meteorologists who are part of the IWP team (see para. 1.5.8). In the same way as the BBC 'weathermen' the ITV National presenters have regular conferences with CFO. The presenters should ensure that all Severe Weather Warnings/FLASH or Early Warnings are included within the broadcast and are brought to the attention of the broadcast authority. Outside broadcast times the warnings should be brought to the attention of the duty editor at ITN.

14.6.2 Other non-BBC (commercial) companies Some commercial companies employ independent professional meteorologists to make personal weather presentations. In these cases arrangements can be made with IWP to provide them with appropriate support. Usually this is in the form of the supply of appropriate data and may include facilities to visit the designated WC to obtain suitable material. It is a condition of these arrangements that company meteorologists agree to operate, as far as is possible, within the synoptic framework provided by CFO guidance. The data are supplied for their exclusive use, and will not be passed on to a third party without written permission from IWP.

14.6.3 Companies without meteorologist presenters usually subscribe to a service comprising one or more of the following:

- a. Caption(s) for a regional chart.
- b. An accompanying script describing forecast weather, wind and temperature and including an outlook; this will normally be read out of vision by an announcer during early evening.
- c. An updated forecast and caption for broadcast during the late evening.

In some cases a company may employ a free-lance non-meteorologist presenter who requires a more detailed tailored service.

14.6.4 Certain WCs arrange, with guidance from IWP, for staff to make personal presentations from the studio of the ITV company. These staff have been identified, just as in the case of the BBC regions, as suitable presenters and who are part of the normal forecaster roster at the particular WC providing the service.

14.7 Services for cable and satellite television

14.7.1 Cable television is organized on a local basis with the main programming input often coming from services broadcast by satellite television channels (e.g. Sky), received at local ground stations and distributed by cable to homes, hotels, etc. within a relatively small area. In general, requirements are similar to those of local radio. Current cable coverage in the United Kingdom is relatively small. Local cable companies should be approached by regional sales. Some may have sufficient autonomy to take services locally, others may wish to indicate the type of service they would ideally like. Such contacts should be reported to IWP.

14.7.2 The direct reception of satellite broadcasts considerably widens the scope for services. A small receiving dish-aerial under the 'footprint' of the satellite can provide an area of coverage which will be Europe-wide in many cases. Some satellite programmes will also be 'beamed' to smaller areas. Requirements are likely to range from detailed short-range forecasts for individual countries, including tailoring to special interest groups, such as sailing, to more general forecasts covering the whole of Europe. A major feature will be the use of computer graphics, satellite imagery, etc. All negotiation of services for direct broadcast satellite television rests with Headquarters, and IWP should be contacted at an early stage especially where independent graphics product-types seem likely to be appropriate.

14.8 FLASH weather messages

14.8.1 General concepts FLASH messages constitute part of the National Severe Weather Warning Service. The messages give public warning of the occurrence of severe weather which may cause considerable inconvenience to a large number of people or present a danger to life. There are five types of FLASH message, namely those for severe gales, heavy snow (including blizzards/drifts), heavy rain, dense fog, and glazed frost/widespread icy roads. EMERGENCY FLASH messages advise of **exceptionally** severe weather and warnings are issued for the **widespread** occurrence of severe gales or storms and very heavy snowfall (including blizzards/drifts).

14.8.2 The essence of the scheme is speed. Rapid dissemination to the public is achieved by means of radio and television broadcasts; whenever possible messages are inserted as interruptions to programmes, but when this is not acceptable they are sent out at the first programme junction after receipt. EMERGENCY FLASH messages will be given considerable prominence on national radio and television either as a news item or as a special broadcast by the weather presenter.

14.8.3 Details of the criteria and procedures for the issue of FLASH and EMERGENCY FLASH messages are described in Annexes A and B to chapter 24.

14.9 Charging policy

14.9.1 A major feature of the television and radio market area is the wide range of charging mechanisms extending from the essential elements of the Public Meteorological Service (see Annex A to chapter 1) to fully commercial arrangements. This section does not discuss general charging principles which are set out in chapter 2, supplemented by the detailed advice on rates promulgated by Meteorological Office Orders Series B. Rather it discusses the subdivision of services into particular charging categories and indicates negotiation responsibilities.

14.9.2 All routine services to BBC Radio and Television, whether scripted or live, are covered by a centrally negotiated agreement. Whilst minor changes can be negotiated locally, any changes to local schedules should be notified to the BBC Account Manager. Any major changes to the schedule should be discussed with the BBC Account Manager.

14.9.3 Many services to BBC national radio are provided as part of the Public Meteorological Service, including some live broadcasts on BBC Radio 4, the 100- and 30-word scripts prepared by CFO, and shipping forecasts and gale warnings as detailed in chapter 18. Additional services on BBC national radio (Radios 1, 2, 3 and 4) are over and above the Public Meteorological Service provision and will be subject to the appropriate commercial rate.

14.9.4 A certain number of scripts for local and regional radio are also provided free of charge. Over and above these, all services are charged for. Standard times for the preparation of scripts and live broadcasts are used to ensure consistency of charging and revenue allocation between WCs. Advice should be sought from the BBC Account Manager.

14.9.5 Charges for services provided live on BBC national television are based on the direct staff cost involved without allowance for overheads. Otherwise all services for BBC Television are provided using the appropriate rates.

Standard preparation times are also used for these scripts and special charges apply for the provision of data or graphics. Advice should be sought from the BBC Account Manager when details are required.

14.9.6 Charges for non-routine service to the BBC, including the provision of consultancy, e.g. to film units, or facilities for news interviews and/or filming at WCs should be agreed locally. In the case of news items, there is often an element of publicity for The Met. Office which can result in a waiver of charges. Invoices should be raised locally.

14.9.7 Some scripts provided to BBC regions are also provided to ILR as part of the Public Met. Service. Charges for other scripts and live broadcasts by Office staff for Independent Local Radio and ITV regional television will be negotiated locally (following discussion with IWP if necessary), using staff and other costs and charging policy as promulgated by Meteorological Office Order Series B. In the case of presentations by non-Meteorological Office staff, where arrangements have been made to provide support and/or data, charges will be calculated by Headquarters (see also paragraph 14.2.9).

14.9.8 Services to major commercial television broadcasting organizations will be negotiated normally by IWP (in conjunction with WCs as appropriate). Note that in the case of ITN, all routine services are covered by an arrangement provided by IWP.

14.9.9 Television graphics facilities will be negotiated by the Media Unit Manager and/or the IWP Sales Manager in conjunction with commercial staff at the appropriate weather centre in the case of regional independent companies. Charges will be in accordance with the IWP Business Plan. All opportunities for the introduction of independent graphics services should be notified to IWP as soon as possible.

14.9.10 Services to local cable TV operations should be regarded in a similar light to those for commercial local radio (section 14.4). In most cases budgets for local programming including weather forecasts are very small and this limits the information which can be provided. Except where competition or publicity factors are considered important, charges should be set to recover costs at least on a minimum multiplier basis. All such services should be discussed with IWP.

14.9.11 FLASH messages (section 14.8) and Small Craft Warnings Service messages (chapter 18) will be provided free and should be offered to all radio and television (in the case of FLASH) stations whether or not these stations receive other services from the Office. For these warning services to be effective the participating station should undertake to broadcast them as soon as possible after receipt.

14.10 Competition and publicity

14.10.1 Competition for the provision of weather forecasts and information on the media has increased and is likely to continue to increase, in view of the valuable publicity which can be gained. The value of this publicity is far greater for our competitors than for the Office, in establishing their names in the market place. In addition the penetration of this particular market sector is facilitated because the main competitive advantage of the Office in terms of accuracy and reliability is relatively less important to the media companies than presentation and pricing aspects. This is not to say that we should lower our standards but rather pay relatively more attention to presentation aspects.

14.10.2 In all BBC regional services provided on radio and television, the correct crediting of The Met. Office as the source of the information is important. It has been agreed with the BBC that accreditation is to be given. The preferred format is 'the Met. Office Regional Weather Centre'.

14.11 Sponsorship

14.11.1 Considerable potential exists for the sponsorship by commercial concerns, especially those whose products are weather-related, of weather forecasts on Independent local radio (and television). All instances of such sponsorship should be notified to Headquarters as soon as it is detected. There may be scope for the negotiation of an increase in charges for services as a result of this but no action should be taken locally without the advice of IWP.

14.11.2 A complementary idea is the sponsorship (effectively) of weather services provided by the WC concerned, taking the form of an advertisement for the WC's services broadcast with the forecasts. Opportunities for this and the effect on charges should be discussed with Headquarters.

BBC TELEVISION REGIONS



IBA TELEVISION REGIONS

