

Graphic-Oriented CCF Products on the Internet

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The increasing popularity of the internet is allowing the National Weather Service (NWS) to reach and provide products to our customers with the latest technology. The NWS has recognized this by including a goal in the Strategic Plan of more graphics forecast data via the internet. The Billings NWS Office has begun this process by producing a graphical 5 day forecast product. This product displays forecasted high and low temperatures and uses images to represent predicted weather conditions. The product allows our customers to have a "quick look" at the forecast for the next five days for a city of interest. The image is imbedded in the "total forecast" page concept, allowing the customer to see a more detailed NWS forecast if desired (see attachment). The product is produced for cities which the NWS Billings Office produces spot temperature forecasts. The product utilizes coded cities forecast (CCF) codes to determine images representing forecasted weather. Currently, CCF forecasts only include temperature and weather forecast for days 1 and 2, with the 3 through 5 day period in the extended forecast. Temperature forecasts in the extended product are generally forecasted in a range and CCF numbers are not included. In order to produce the graphical image, spot temperature forecasts and a CCF code are necessary. The Billings Office works around this by producing a text product which includes a spot temperature forecast and weather code out to 5 days. Data for days 1 and 2 is produced by the short term forecaster. The extended forecaster, who already creates a forecast with temperature ranges and a weather forecast, simply provides a spot temperature forecast and CCF code for the latter days of the product. Both forecasters' data is then combined into a text file and included in our area forecast discussion. This data is then used to create the graphical product as well as the traditional CCF forecast. The FORTAN and PERL scripts that generate this product will be easily adapted when 7 day forecasts begin this fall. In summary, with little added workload to the operational staff, we are able to produce a graphics based forecast product to our customers. The product will be very adaptable to the planned extension of the CCF and zone forecast product to 7 days this fall. In addition, the added effort to produce these numbers will assist in verification efforts. The product can be seen on the Billings National Weather Service homepage at www.wrh.noaa.gov/Billings.