



Teaching Tip; Weather Reports & Forecasts Timing Is Everything

By Larry Bothe, MCFI, DPE, 2/2/2009

When teaching weather reports and forecasts it is very important to help the student differentiate between which weather products tell us what has happened in the past, and which ones endeavor to tell us what the weather will be in the future. Examples of history-type reports are METAR's, PIREP's, Weather Depiction Charts, Surface Analysis Charts, and Radar Summary Charts. They all tell us how the weather was at a time in the past when an observation was taken. Radar does NOT forecast thunderstorms in the future.

Common weather forecasts that predict what the weather will be in the future are TAF's, Area Forecasts, Convective Outlook (which does predict the likelihood of thunderstorms in the future), and Prog Charts. Note that weather products with the word "report" in their title are almost always historic, while ones with "forecast" or "outlook" in the title predict the future. "Charts" can be either.

If your students know the difference between the historic and future products, then they won't try to tell the examiner things like they will consult the METAR's to determine what the weather will be at the destination later in the day. Further, after you teach them how long the forecast ones look into the future, they will know that they will need to consult a Prog Chart rather than a TAF if the examiner asks about the weather the day-after-tomorrow.

Larry Bothe is an FAA Designated Pilot Examiner, FAAS Team Representative and Gold Seal Instructor in the Indianapolis, IN FSDO area. He is also a Master Certified Flight Instructor as designated by Master Instructors, LLC and has over 6500 hours in more than 70 types of aircraft. He may be contacted at LBothe@comcast.net.