



Role of the broadcaster in communicating forecast uncertainty

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In 2006, the US National Research Council published a report identifying a need for meteorological products “that effectively communicate forecast uncertainty information.” The report states that failure to provide such information deprives users of “knowing the uncertainties of the forecasts upon which they rely.”

While the US National Weather Service was charged with taking a leadership role in delivering such products, the rest of the weather enterprise (non-government organizations, academia, and the private sector) was also urged to take responsibility for communicating forecast uncertainty.

Since that report, there has been a large increase in products disseminated in an attempt to express and quantify uncertainty. Ensembles of numerical weather prediction models, for example, are now made available to forecasters.

For a variety of reasons, weather forecasts delivered on television and radio have traditionally been deterministic in nature. But broadcasters—like other members of the weather enterprise—may be able to express forecast uncertainty through techniques such as appending the forecast with probability of precipitation, verbally or graphically disclosing forecast confidence, or presenting alternative forecast scenarios to their audience.