

Probability of Precipitation a reality

On July 5 AES began supplying Probability of Precipitation (POP) information in the daily forecasts. Less than a year earlier, on October 29, 1981 the Radio Television News Directors' Association of Canada/Atmospheric Environment Service Task Force (RTNDA/AES) formulated 13 recommendations designed to improve the communication of weather information to Canadians. The second recommendation requested that "The AES provide probability of precipitation information as a routine parameter in public weather forecasts as public demand for such information is high."

This spring Barry Pauley, President of the RTNDA, presented Environment Minister John Roberts with the recommendations. He accepted them and Don Smith, director general of Field Services Directorate was given the responsibility to implement this new service to be provided by AES. In March, Al Campbell under the supervision of Phil Aber, director Field Meteorological Systems Branch, was assigned the task of initiating the POP program.

Campbell immediately began gathering reference material and performing the administrative work to select a project person to assist him. David Grimes, an MT6 from the Pacific Weather Centre was chosen to coordinate the implementation with AES Regional staff, the CMC, Training Branch, the Research Directorate, Information Directorate and many others and to prepare written material.

Grimes reported to AES Downsview on April 29 and immediately began research and preparation of an implementation plan. He quickly produced papers to promote discussion of probability and for guidance on implementation in the forecast offices as well as an explanation of POP to users by the WO4s.

A POP meteorologist for each region was then chosen to coordinate the implementation procedures. It was their responsibility to recommend points of interest for POP (serving as a verification rain gauge in each regional forecast area) to their RDs. They would also funnel problems to the national coordinator during implementation and recommend

preparation of regional studies of precipitation frequencies under different regimes.

Information Directorate prepared a complete press package consisting of entertaining taped public service announcements for radio stations across Canada, a POP fact sheet, a Rough and Ready User's Guide and a press release announcing the beginning of the pro-

gram July 5. Press response was good and AES staff were interviewed by various media.

In September the procedures will be reviewed and in March 1983 the program will be evaluated. If all goes well and the success of this program continues, Probability of Precipitation will become a permanent part of the daily weather forecasts.