

The Latest Product from Climate Monitoring is . . . NEWS

The newest product to come from the Canadian Climate Centre's Monitoring and Prediction Division (CCRM) is news.

A dedicated group of climatologists based at AES Headquarters in Downsview and led by Dr. Stan Woronko, Peter Scholefield and Peter Lee, has until now been known for publishing a detailed weekly and monthly summary of national climate events called *Climatic Perspectives*. The division is now directing its efforts towards issuing a brief one-page weekly news-

situation in Saskatchewan. A decision is finally reached on the lead story for the week and a "catchy" headline concocted. At the same time the climatologists will have sketched out an easy-to-understand diagram to illustrate the number-one climate event.

It just remains to squeeze one or two shorter items on to the page — perhaps another regional highlight or a few "historical" climate facts.

The meeting proceeds promptly and effi-

*The newsletter is also innovative in that it will be one of the first attempt to distribute climate news electronically. Plans are afoot to transmit the newsletter on an experimental basis via the new AES ANIKOM 100 satellite system. This wide-ranging weather information service is available to any subscriber possessing a PC terminal and a miniature satellite receiving dish. Only launched during the past month or so, ANIKOM eventually expects to reach a considerable number of media outlets as well as AES weather offices who will act as third party distributors.

In addition, other state-of-the-art distribution methods for the bulletin may be tried. These could range from arranging "super fax" transmissions to cable TV stations to making the climate information available to the media on demand via direct computer access.

*Inclusion in the bulletin of major drought, flooding and other water news is considered so important, AES has held meetings with Inland Waters (IWD) officials with a view to turning the bulletin into a joint bi-service newsletter.

Over all, the new weekly climate news bulletin is liked by departmental communications officials as being something fairly unique in government, which has a tendency to issue monthly or bi-monthly publications. One senior communications person commented: "Right now there is a tremendous interest by both public and media in global climate news — everything from the greenhouse effect to depletion of the ozone layer. The weekly climate monitoring bulletin could be just the first step in a great new surge of climate information in the future".



CCRM staff and associates gather for regular Tuesday editorial meeting, a vital step in the preparation of the new weekly climatic newsletter. Left to right, Amir Shabbar, Peter Scholefield, Brian Taylor, Ronald Crowe, Mike Skarpathiotakis, Alain Caillet and Aaron Gergye.

letter that combines climatic expertise, editorial savvy and potential high-tech distribution methods.

The new product, still in the experimental stage is seen as something of an innovation even by other national weather services. The director of the U.S. Climate Analysis Center has written Peter Scholefield expressing great interest in the Canadian initiative.

To obtain the best idea of how the news bulletin is assembled, one should attend one of the regular Tuesday editorial meetings held in the CCRM briefing room.

A team of about seven or eight climatologists and technical specialists along with Applications and Impact climatologist Ron Crowe sit around a large table covered with weather maps, statistical summaries and back issues of *Climatic Perspectives*.

First, weekly climate summaries from each AES Region are read aloud. Then a debate begins about the relative merits of highlighting (say) heavy thunderstorm activity in Ontario over the past few days versus publishing a news report on a potentially serious drought

ciently with Dr. Woronko, the Division chief, having the final say. For half an hour you could close your eyes and almost imagine you were attending an editorial board of *Time* or *Macleans Magazine*!

Some further interesting facts about the bulletin:

*The climatic news bulletin is considered unique for being produced entirely in-house. Once the format has been decided at the editorial meeting, climatologist Alain Caillet and technician Mike Skarpathiotakis produce a complete layout on Ventura desktop publishing software. (Alain also edits the French version of the newsletter.) The bulletin is then printed on a laser printer and distributed to users directly from AES Downsview.

*The new bulletin is probably the first climate report to be scheduled for direct distribution to the Canadian news media. Dr. Woronko admits that the real news value of the publication has yet to be determined. It is generally agreed, however, that journalists writing up a major weather story would consider any accessible climate news as valuable background material.



Remo Massaroni of Weather Services Directorate, points out some features of ANIKOM 100 which may allow the weekly climate newsletter to be transmitted electronically to media, users and weather offices via satellite. Sizing up the new system are senior CCRM officials, left to right, Dr. Stan Woronko, Peter Scholefield and Peter Lee.