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INFORMATION PAPER

Asia and Pacific (APAC)

**Twenty-second Meeting of the Meteorological
Information Exchange Working Group (MET/IE WG/22)**

Bangkok, Thailand, 18 to 21 March 2024

Agenda Item 3: Quality control, monitoring and management of meteorological information exchange

APAC VAAC BACK-UP

(Presented by Australia, Japan, New Zealand)

SUMMARY

This paper outlines the recent back-up tests conducted by the APAC VAACs Darwin, Tokyo and Wellington, issues encountered, system and procedural changes, and tentative dates for any upcoming back-up tests.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Handbook on the International Airways Volcano Watch (IAVW) – Operational Procedures and Contact List (Doc 9766) recommends that Volcanic Ash Advisory Centres (VAACs) conduct back-up tests at least annually.

1.2 This paper contains information from VAAC Darwin, VAAC Tokyo and VAAC Wellington on their back-up tests and arrangements.

2. DISCUSSION

VAAC Darwin and VAAC Tokyo back-up

2.1 VAAC Darwin and VAAC Tokyo conducted a back-up test on 28 June 2023. A full test was carried out to test new procedures after the review of back-up documentation. There were over 10 responses from operators to each VAAC for positive receipt. The VAACs are hoping for an improvement on this in the next back-up test.

2.2 In January 2024, VAAC Darwin and VAAC Tokyo have reviewed the Scheme of Cooperation which underpins the back-up arrangements between the two VAACs. This includes a review of the AFTN dissemination lists. The next planned back-up test is tentatively scheduled for June 2024.

2.3 Back-up operations by VAAC Tokyo for planned outages at VAAC Darwin were conducted on 15 November and 4 December 2023. The back-up tests prepared the VAACs for a smooth operational back-up.

VAAC Darwin and VAAC Wellington back-up

2.4 VAAC Darwin and VAAC Wellington conducted their annual back-up test on 30 May 2023. Due to an increase in interest in receiving VAA from user groups who don't have access to the AFTN, one specific objective of the test this year was to test the back-up email dissemination lists. There were minimal responses from users on the AFTN and around 40% of users on the email distribution lists.

2.5 During the VAAC Darwin and VAAC Wellington back-up test, the VAA issued by VAAC Darwin was received by the RODBs in IWXXM form but was not received for the VAA issued by VAAC Wellington. This will be looked at for the next back-up test.

2.6 VAAC Wellington is undergoing an upgrade to the forecasting software Visual Weather in early 2024. After the upgrade, VAAC Darwin and VAAC Wellington will conduct a back-up test tentatively in April 2024.

2.7 Back-up operations by VAAC Wellington for planned outages at VAAC Darwin were conducted on 15 November and 4 December 2023. The back-up tests prepared the VAACs for a smooth operational back-up.

VAAC Darwin and VAAC Washington back-up

2.8 VAAC Darwin, VAAC Montreal and VAAC Washington have been carrying out back-up tests every 3 months of the VAAC Washington area of responsibility. The last back-up test was conducted on 6 December 2023. Instead of the regular back-up test, the VAAC Darwin staff issued a real advisory for one of the VAAC Washington volcanoes (Santa Maria, Guatemala) and the dissemination was tracked to a number of locations. A corresponding WV SIGMET was issued for the advisory which indicated that the users had received the advisory issued under back-up.

2.9 VAAC Darwin has updated its operational advisory webpage so that all back-up products now appear on the webpage.

3. ACTION BY THE MEETING

3.1 The meeting is invited to note the information contained in this paper.
