

Can we trust the forecasts?

by weatherman Michael Fish

There is little you do in life that isn't connected with the weather – what you are going to wear, what you are going to eat, how many blankets you have on the bed. That's why it's so important. And weather forecasts may be a matter of life and death – thousands of lives are saved every year by people taking notice of weather forecasts. In the US, 5, the weather is far more severe than here. They have hurricanes and tornadoes that thankfully we don't get in the UK – although there may be some horrendous weather in this country, too.

In the UK, the weather is a national institution. One always talks about it. However, it's 6 that people complain if the Met Office get their forecasts wrong. For a start, these forecasts are only what are called probability forecasts. Besides, these seasonal weather forecasts are not really designed for the general public but mostly for commercial organisations. Electricity generating plants, for example, want to know if temperatures are going to be above or below average so they can plan their maintenance.

Having said that, the seasonal forecast from the Met Office is worth more than a horoscope. A lot of blame has to lie with the 7 who misinterpret the forecasts. I can recall the ridiculous headlines when this summer's forecast was issued, saying it



was going to be a sweltering summer when the Met Office just said that it was going to be slightly above average. A few years ago, when I was still working at the Met Office, the winter prospects said it was going to be a mild winter with one or two snowy spells. The next day the headline in one national newspaper said, “White Christmas on the way”. 8, it's hardly surprising that people think the forecasts are worse than they actually are.

Making predictions about the weather actually gets more 9 every year. It's amazing to me how the accuracy of the forecasts has improved. When I started at the Met Office, you were lucky if you got an accurate 36-hour forecast. Now it's easy to get 10- to 15-day forecasts and more often than not they are right. But if you are planning to take your holidays in the UK you will just have to take pot luck.

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Tekst 3 Can we trust the forecasts?

Kies bij iedere open plek in de tekst het juiste antwoord uit de gegeven mogelijkheden.

1p 5

- A for instance
- B however
- C meanwhile
- D moreover

1p 6

- A acceptable
- B essential
- C logical
- D unfair

1p 7

- A companies
- B experts
- C media
- D public

1p 8

- A As a result
- B In spite of this
- C On top of this
- D Similarly

1p 9

- A absurd
- B complicated
- C inconsistent
- D popular
- E reliable

Bronvermelding

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