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Public Information Statement 24-44
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From: Mike Hopkins, NOAA
 Director, Surface and Upper Air Division
 Office of Observations

Subject: Suspension of Radiosonde Observations at Tallahassee, Florida:
Effective July 1, 2024

Effective July 1, 2024, and until further notice, the National Weather Service (NWS) is indefinitely suspending radiosonde observations at Tallahassee, Florida, due to a global supply chain disruption of Helium, and the prohibitive cost of the Helium gas contracts. The Tallahassee station has NWS Upper Air identifier 'KTAE' and World Meteorological Organization (WMO) Upper Air site number, '72214.' The NWS launches radiosondes from 100 Upper Air sites throughout the United States and the Caribbean, using Helium at 12 of these sites. Hydrogen is the preferred gas because it is cost-effective and a more reliable gas option. The agency plans to convert many sites to Hydrogen as soon as practical and as funding becomes available. However, safety concerns prevent Hydrogen from being used as an option at the current Tallahassee Upper Air facility.

In the near term, the affected site will benefit from data collected by radiosonde observations from neighboring Upper Air sites, polar and geostationary satellite soundings, and from instruments on aircraft flying into nearby airports. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and United States Air Force aircraft also provide special soundings during tropical storms.

Radiosondes are instruments attached to weather balloons that send back a wide range of upper atmospheric data to support weather forecasts, including temperature, dew point, relative humidity, barometric pressure, wind speed, and wind direction. Radiosondes are one of many technologies that collect earth observation data for weather modeling and forecasting. Data is also collected from instruments aboard commercial aircraft, surface observing stations, satellites, radars, and buoys.

The Helium gas shortage affects approximately 12% of all NWS Upper Air Sites. The NWS will take all steps possible to mitigate additional supply chain and contracting issues and continue converting sites to Hydrogen where locations, leases, and safe operations allow and as funding becomes available.

If you or your organization have any questions about these changes, please contact:

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