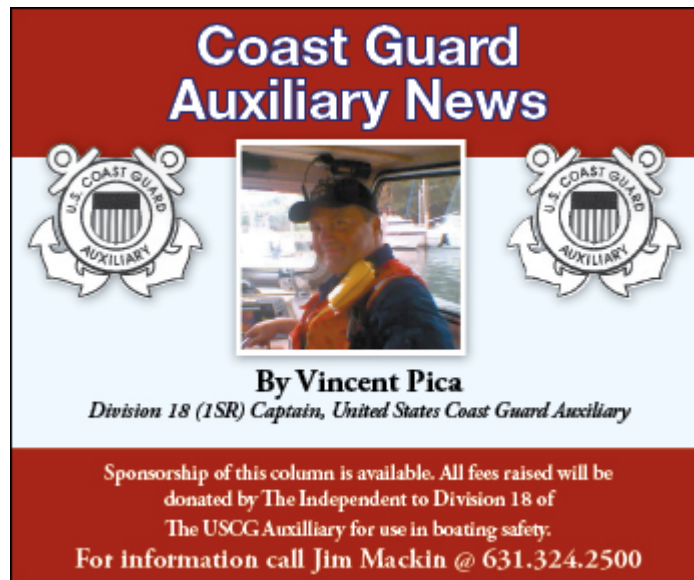


THE *East Hampton • Southampton • Riverhead • Southold • Shelter Island*
INDEPENDENT

Coast Guard Aux NEWS ▶

May 27, 2009



The graphic features a red header with the text "Coast Guard Auxiliary News" in white. Below the header is a white section containing two U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary logos on either side of a central photograph of a man in a blue shirt and orange life vest. Below the photo, the text reads "By Vincent Pica" and "Division 18 (ISR) Captain, United States Coast Guard Auxiliary". A red footer contains white text: "Sponsorship of this column is available. All fees raised will be donated by The Independent to Division 18 of The USCG Auxiliary for use in boating safety. For information call Jim Mackin @ 631.324.2500".

Nothing can seem simpler than reading the weather report. You open the paper. It says "80% chance of rain today" and you cancel plans. When it doesn't rain, or rains for 30 minutes, we grouse about the forecaster - "how can someone be wrong 50% of the time and keep their jobs!" But if you had drilled down a little, maybe there was more information that you could have used to your benefit - and an appreciation of the forecaster.

Weather on the Web

Clearly, the world is awash in web sites that can tell you the weather. Here is just a partial list:

www.weather.com The Weather Channel

www.accuweather.com AccuWeather

www.weatherbug.com The Weather Bug

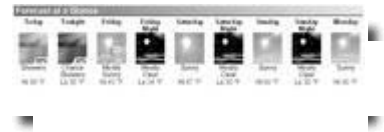
www.wunderground.com Weather Underground

<http://forecast.weather.gov> NOAA

Each portrays pretty much the same information that you can get by opening the newspaper over a cup of coffee at the kitchen table. And you may be surprised to know that they all likely get their weather data from the same source - the US's NOAA - the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration. NOAA

(www.noaa.gov) is part of the Commerce Department, which says a lot about what government thinks effects business the most! If NOAA's website has any fault at all, it is how much information you can get from it! But, as NOAA says, "NOAA's weather programs touch the lives of every American. Every day, decisions are made based on NOAA weather information - from the mundane "should I pack an umbrella today?" to the most critical and potentially life-saving." So, "more" is putting safety first. And that is where safety must be.

If all the services get their basic data from NOAA, why don't you just go there and get the info? An example of what you can get directly from NOAA would be:



(click for larger version)

This probably looks amazingly similar to any of the weather reports you see in the paper or on your internet provider. So, maybe we all just should go to NOAA. It is free too!

But the real answer, going back to the intro of this column, is you want to be able to drill down and not every weather service gives you that ability.

Drill, Baby, Drill!

On any given day, you can get a weather report what tells you that the chance of rain is 80%, such as March 19, 2009 did. So, if you are planning to do anything outside, you might cancel or move it to another venue. But the 80% covers the whole day, i.e., there is an 80% chance that it will rain sometime today... When?

But there are two 'buttons' of interest. Upper left corner it says "Details" and along the bottom it says "Hour-By-Hour." Hmm... If we try Details, we get:

Better but what I really want to know is when the rain is likely to arrive and this still looks like all day! What happens if I drill down on hour-by-hour?

Bingo! If you look at the chances of precipitation (just above the graph of temperatures), you'll see that the chances of rain before 2pm of about 1 in 3 or less! Even by 3pm, it is even money that no rain has fallen!

BTW, if you are interested in being part of USCG Forces, email me at JoinUSCGAux2009@aol.com or go direct to Lisa Etter, who is in charge of new members matters, at FSO-PS@emcg.us and we will help you "get in this thing..."