



Met Office: 1206877

required. Conditions in the critical morning period – which Lapsley describes as “first-wave departures” – were correctly forecast six hours in advance on 85 per cent of occasions.

“We are geared to the morning period but other parts of the world, such as North America,

are affected by sudden snow or ice storms during the day. This leaves very little margin for error,” she says.

The service forms a major component of bmi’s plan to reduce avoidable de-icing delays by 80 per cent and has been used operationally

since the 2005 winter season. The system currently covers bmi’s London airports and other key destinations such as Brussels, Amsterdam and Manchester.

BA followed suit in January 2008, using the Met Office Airline De-icing Forecast Service for coverage at four regional airports in the UK: Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen and Manchester.

“We’re talking to BA about rolling out to major hub airports such as Heathrow and Gatwick,” Lapsley remarks. Airline destinations further afield can also be covered – she refers to “numerous trials” of the service at locations such as Calgary and Denver. “It’s proved an eye-opener for the airlines,” Lapsley says, adding that she expects widening interest and airlines taking advantage of the free trial.

The Met Office is working alongside SITA to promote the Airline De-icing Forecast Service in the US.

“We already have a flight planning service with SITA,” says Lapsley. However, “SITA is also pursuing de-icing opportunities in North America”, she says.

The price of the Airline De-icing Forecast Service depends on customer requirements and the size of rollout. Lapsley adds that the science and forecasting techniques used “are pretty much perfected”. Ben Vogel ■

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