

3.10 Deputy G.C.L. Baudains of the Minister for Planning and Environment regarding the staff employed in the Meteorological Section of the Environment Department:

Would the Minister advise how many staff are currently employed in the Meteorological Section of his Department, and outline the tasks that they perform?

Senator F.E. Cohen (The Minister for Planning and Environment):

Currently 17 staff are employed in the Meteorological Section. They include, first, the Principal Meteorological Officer in overall charge of the section, and second, a team of 10 forecasters. This includes 2 senior meteorologists, 5 senior forecasters, and 3 junior forecasters. Finally, a team of 6 meteorological observers. This includes a senior meteorologist in charge of the observing team, and an information technology officer responsible for the section's essential computer and communications systems. The forecasting team is responsible for preparing aviation forecasts for the Channel Islands Control Zone at airfields. They are also responsible for the public service and maritime forecasts, and warnings prepared for the local media here and in Guernsey, premium rate telephone services in both Bailiwicks and various local internet sites. The observing team maintain the weather watch. They also provide the half-hourly aviation met reports which are required under international regulations for Jersey Airport to operate. They also support the duty forecasters. A shift system operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year, with one senior forecaster and a qualified observer available throughout the 24 hour period, and a second forecaster available between 7.00 a.m. and 3.00 p.m. Thank you.

3.10.1 Deputy G.C.L. Baudains:

Notwithstanding the importance of the service that they provide - I think we all appreciate that, Sir - I wonder does the Minister believe that given the computerisation of weather forecasting these days that the number is appropriate. Would he perhaps consider reviewing this area of his department on an efficiency basis?

Senator F.E. Cohen:

I do not know the answer to the question. What I do know is that the team previously was 21. It has been reduced to 17, and when certain technology is implemented it can be reduced to 15. I am told it cannot be reduced any further. But I do think it would be worthwhile reviewing the whole of the department from a perspective of what the States as a whole wants to get out of it and value for money, and I intend to implement that, but it is going to take some time.