President’s Column

Marking Milestones

As a radiosonde manufacturer for more than half a century, we have marked many milestones. Professor Vilho Väisälä made his first successful radiosounding 66 years ago, and this September, Vaisala produced its five millionth radiosonde. Measured in today’s demand, five million radiosondes would be enough for at least six years of global soundings. This is an impressive figure and a source of great pride for us. At the moment, Vaisala’s history-making radiosonde, a GPS sonde, is on my desk. Soon it will be on display in the Vaisala showroom.

During the same month that we manufactured the five millionth radiosonde, the Omega navigation network was phased out. By early October, hundreds of sounding stations throughout the world had switched to GPS-based wind finding and GPS radiosondes. In regions where coverage is available, Loran-C windfinding was also adopted.

Despite some initial concern, the changeover has been very smooth. Surface wind measurement is one of the most important weather observations. Wind has an effect on many aspects of our daily lives, and wind observations are critical, of course, for meteorological applications. Vaisala was the first to introduce wind display with circular presentation for wind data with the mean value wind measurement integrated into the electronic display. Air traffic controllers, in particular, have appreciated this easy-to-read wind instrument. Now we have developed a new-generation series of wind displays. These products cover various applications and needs, including comprehensive wind systems. Using the latest component technology, we have made the display even easier to read. This equipment is also more compact and convenient to use.

As the articles in this Vaisala News demonstrate, the applications of weather observations cover the full range, from floating launch platforms to cloud generated music. These are two extremes on the scale, with weather representing an obstacle for one and an opportunity for the other. In some cases, the conditions can pose a real threat. In others, weather observations are just ‘nice to know’. It might seem that such varying demands and conditions would require many different types of measurement instruments. This is not the case. Because today’s products are flexible, programmable and designed for extreme conditions, they are also versatile enough to handle these wide-ranging applications. Whatever the need, Vaisala products offer a solution. Not even the sky’s the limit. Only the imagination.

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