

# BROADCASTING CABLE

## WEATHERMAN IN A CAN



**Edward St. Pé and his fellow forecasters at WeatherVision give stations without news departments a chance to offer on-air forecasts.**

In 1991, when Edward St. Pé began Jackson, Miss.-based WeatherVision (then known as National Weather Networks), his vision was to bring 30-second weather cut-ins to broadcast stations that didn't have news and weather operations. The hook for broadcasters was that it would give them programming that advertisers interested only in news would find attractive.

Ten years later, St. Pé's company is providing on-air

weather forecasts for more than 100 stations, including the Pax Network, which recently became the first network St. Pé signed for his service.

"We supply a 30-second weather cut which allows them to go and sell a news product," says St. Pé, company president. "We picked up some WB stations, UPN, and a few public stations. And we finally got a call from Pax."

St. Pé says his company will feed its customers whatever weather programming they want but, for now, there are three Ku-uplinked feeds: early morning, early afternoon and late afternoon. St. Pé, along with three anchors, handles the task of hosting the forecasts for client stations.

"Some stations want a locally branded 40 seconds that tie into an advertiser, and about 80% of our stations do that," he continues. "But other stations want it in the newscast, so the anchor throws it to us, we take the pitch and throw it back."

St. Pé adds that his company has never gone to stations with existing news operations attempting to replace on-air talent and meteorologists. But, with the current economic crunch, he does see the potential to service stations that have folded news operations or scaled back on the morning cut-ins during the national morning news.

The deal worked out with stations is typically a combination of cash and barter, with larger-market stations paying more cash. "We can tweak the deal with spots," St. Pé adds. "So if a station can't afford the cash, we can give it at a lower cash cost but add a spot."

WeatherVision also offers the spots around its weather forecasts, recently selling segments to brand advertisers such as SlimFast on a national basis and, in the South, Bengal Chemical.

"After the Pax deal, that's when I can tell something happened," says St. Pé. "It legitimized what we've been doing all these years."—K.K.