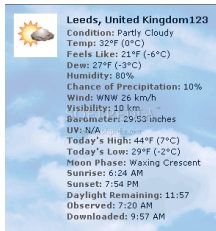


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Weather Watcher

[Update Your Weather Information](#)

A weather utility for your computer

Although not given enough attention until recently, weather has an important influence on our life, society and economy. With a vital impact on our health and life in general, weather forecasting has started to be determined up to a year in advance for regions during different seasons. There is a close connection between weather changes and certain businesses, therefore lots of people are interested in weather predictions and the control of the climate changes. Weather Watcher is a Windows desktop weather station that uses a Web service to retrieve the current conditions for the area (city) of your interest. Instead of searching on the Internet for weather predictions, you can sit comfortably at your desk and be alerted each time the smallest weather variation has occurred. With this freeware application you are able to see hourly, daily or detailed weather forecasts and weather maps for about 77,000 cities around the globe, but mostly for the United States. Installation runs smoothly and the program turns out not to be a resource hog. On my system less than 10MB of RAM memory were used when running in system tray and took 12MB of disk space. With lots of customizable options, Weather Watcher can be set to update data at an appropriate time interval or display the current information in a specific format as soon as you point the mouse cursor over its icon. It can convert data into most popular formats, set auto-updating satellite weather maps as your desktop wallpaper, export and log the weather data, display the current temperature in a customized tray icon and the application's interface supports skin selection. As soon as the program is installed, you are being asked to set up its options. In the General tab, miscellaneous information can be found, such as loading the program when Windows starts. As we don't want another application running in our already full taskbar, Weather Watcher can be set to run quietly in system tray when minimize button is actioned. Retrieving forecasts every 30 seconds and checking for new versions of the software are also available features. Nobody is interested in the weather prediction of all areas of the globe, so adding an active city is required. To do so, entering its name is all the input required from you. As soon as you find it in the database you can add it to your own list. Editing the city name is also an available option. If you are unsure about the name, you can type in its zip code (unfortunately this feature works for cities situated within USA only). If a wrong one is chosen, you can remove it from the list individually or choose Remove all. As you might swap between your favorite cities, automatic retrieving of weather forecasts feature is implemented (if the city is changed). Updating the displayed information is very important, as being out of date is not a suitable option for your business. With a refresh rate up to 20 minutes, the application can re-try updating every minute and set the tray icon to Italic if the operation fails. Screen saver running clearly states that no one has been using the computer for quite a while, so updating is not necessary, preventing the overload of Internet traffic. Regarding the latter, if you are using a proxy server, the software must know your connection username and password in order to retrieve the latest weather forecasts. Using a dial-up connection is not the perfect choice especially with its constant updates, but you can enable the option to download only when an Internet connection is found. As measuring systems are not universally adopted, Weather Watcher can display its data in the common formats. For temperature you can choose between Fahrenheit and Celsius (or both), visibility is in miles or kilometers, the barometer values are in inches, mm, hPa, kPa or mb; precipitation can be displayed in inches, cm or mm and the wind speed in mph, km/h, m/s, kts or bft. Also, you can choose to display in degrees the wind direction and in tenths when using Celsius temperatures. Although I haven't received any severe alerts when using Weather Watcher, they can be filtered using a phrase or just a single word you can

define. If you will type *red code*, you will see that nothing is going to happen unless you live (AGAIN) in the US and a major hurricane is going to knock on your door. Talking about customization and interface, the program allows you to browse for different sounds to be played in the case of three major events: New Severe Alert, Weather Retrieved and on the availability of a new version of Weather Watcher. If you are not using the computer while these notifications are enabled, there is nothing to worry about as you will still receive them until acknowledgment. There are quite a few wallpapers that the program can download from the satellite via its Web service. They can be in BMP, GIF, JPG, PNG, HTM or HTML file formats and some of them are using Windows Active Desktop. Wallpapers can be stretched or centered on your screen, and you are able to see the date and time when the photo was taken. The wallpaper can be updated between 1 and 20 minutes or when a severe alert is downloading. As you probably want a new wallpaper "copy" on the program's launch (which can coincide with Windows startup), a 30-second pause time for all the settings to load is more than welcomed. The interface design can be modified using the skins feature that the program provides. Choosing between five different settings (Interface skin, Forecast skin, Forecast icons, Tray icon and Tray tooltip skin), you can obtain a fresh new look for the application, or you can choose one you are most familiar with. Saving the weather data can be done using its built-in Exporter in a HTML file each time the conditions are updated. When new weather information is retrieved, the file from your hard drive is being overwritten. You can use the default templates or you can edit your own. Viewing and deleting the export file are also available options. The other choice you have is saving to a local log file. The difference between the Export and Log features is that for the latter the info is being appended. In the Tray Icon tab, you can customize the information to be viewed when hovering the mouse cursor over the program's icon situated in the system tray. You can display "feels like" temperature and degree symbol, show tree balloon when new severe alert is displayed, etc. You can set up the program with regards to which action to follow when you left-click (single or double) the mouse. You can display temperature or condition icon, or both, and select the font, its style and size. Related to the above paragraph is the Tray Tooltip tab. There you can select the values you are interested in when you see the tray window. And there are loads of boxes to be checked. To enumerate just a few of them, there is Location, Feels Like, Visibility, Sunrise, Dew Point, Humidity, Moon Phase, Precipitation, etc. As for the options, there is the abbreviation of value descriptions, the possibility of hiding the measurement units or value descriptions, etc. The tray Balloon Tip will be shown in case of different changes like Dew Point, Last Observed, UV Index, etc. Overall, this application has lots of good features but also some bad points. It is useful especially when you own a business related to climate like agriculture or tourism, but not only. You can customize its options (and it has a lot of them) to suit your needs, from how it looks to what data should appear on your screen. **The Good** Weather Watcher is a desktop utility with lots of useful data to display. The interface has been designed with style and customization level is pretty high. Using a Web Service, this free software enables you to see hourly, daily or detailed weather forecasts and the moon phases for the next eight nights (it helps in case you are a werewolf). A version of this software is available for Pocket PC to keep you up-to-date with the latest weather information. **The Bad** It does not create a new directory for exporting data if the folder is not already created on your hard drive. In the Assistance menu, the use of the index tab did not return any valid entries. In Conversion tab, if "Both" checkbox is selected, you can still choose the temperature between Fahrenheit and Celsius - minor display glitch. Some features are for US only, like Severe Alerting, but for the rest of the globe inhabitants, in case of a natural outbreak, we won't even know what hit us. Opened tabs inside the program give the impression of another instance running in taskbar. Desktop wallpapers are static (changes are unnoticeable) and not exactly helpful. Tray window's transparency test did not run successfully. **The Truth** Although it is a free application, I kind of get the discriminating feeling that Weather Watcher was not developed for worldwide use. "Hundreds of new

maps," they say, but most of them are for USA. Regardless, I would rather have an application to display weather info in my Web browser or Explorer window. But of course, that is just me. On the other hand, you can download it and check its full capabilities. Long live the Weather Channel! Enjoy. *Here are some snapshots of the application in action:*