

## SPECIFICATIONS OF OCTET CONTENTS

Notes:

- (1) Octets are numbered 1, 2, 3, etc., starting at the beginning of each section.
- (2) In the following, bit positions within octets are referred to as bit 1 to bit 8, where bit 1 is the most significant and bit 8 is the least significant bit. Thus, an octet with only bit 8 set to 1 would have the integer value 1.
- (3) Specific features for different editions, when different, will be clearly indicated below in sequence.

### Section 0 – Indicator section

Octet No.	Contents
1–4	BUFR (coded according to the CCITT International Alphabet No. 5)
5–7	Total length of BUFR message (including Section 0)
8	BUFR edition number (4)

### Section 1 – Identification section

Octet No.	Contents
1–3	Length of section
4	BUFR master table (zero if standard WMO FM 94 BUFR tables are used – see Note 2)
5–6	Identification of originating/generating centre (see Common Code table C-11)
7–8	Identification of originating/generating sub-centre (allocated by originating/generating centre – see Common Code table C-12)
9	Update sequence number (zero for original messages and for messages containing only delayed reports; incremented for the other updates)
10	<div> <div>Bit 1 = 0</div> <div>No optional section</div> <div>= 1</div> <div>Optional section follows</div> </div>
	<div> <div>Bits 2-8</div> <div>Set to zero (reserved)</div> </div>
11	Data category (Table A)
12	International data sub-category (see Common Code table C-13 and Note 3)
13	Local data sub-category (defined locally by automatic data-processing (ADP) centres – see Note 3)
14	Version number of master table – see Notes 2 and 5
15	Version number of local tables used to augment master table in use – see Note 2
16–17	<div> <div>Year (4 digits)</div> <div>Month</div> <div>Day</div> <div>Hour</div> <div>Minute</div> <div>Second</div> </div> <div>Most typical time for the BUFR message contents – see Note 4</div>
18	
19	
20	
21	
22	
23–	Optional – for local use by ADP centres

Notes:

- (1) If a BUFR message is corrected, the corrected message shall be produced at least as a complete subset, containing all data items. Operator 2 04 YYY qualified by descriptor 0 31 021 may be used to indicate which data item or items were corrected.
- (2) A BUFR master table may be defined for a scientific discipline other than meteorology. This shall be indicated by non-zero numeric values in octet 4. Such a table will be developed when a recognized organization exists with the necessary expertise to maintain such a master table, and when at least one of the following situations also exists:

- Requirements cannot be met using Master Table 0.
- There is expected to be a minimal amount of overlap with respect to the entries in Master Table 0.

The current list of master tables, along with their associated values in octet 4, is as follows:

- 0 Meteorology maintained by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO)
- 10 Oceanography maintained by the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of UNESCO

Whenever a new master table is developed, the following criteria shall apply:

- Table C may not be changed, nor may Classes 00 and 31 of Table B. These would remain identical for any of the master tables.
- For Classes 01 through 09 (coordinate classes) and Class 33 of Table B, and for Categories 00 and 01 of Table D, these classes and categories must have the same name and be used for the same types of descriptors as in Master Table 0; however, individual descriptors within these classes and categories would be left to the discretion of the Organization defining the particular master table in question.
- For Table A and all remaining classes of Table B and categories of Table D, these would be left to the discretion of the Organization defining the particular master table in question.

For all master tables (including Master Table 0):

- Each revision of the master tables shall be given a new version number.
  - Local tables shall define those parts of the master table which are reserved for local use, thus version numbers of local tables may be changed at will by the originating centre. If no local table is used, the version number of the local table shall be encoded as 0.
- (3) The local data sub-category is maintained for backwards-compatibility with BUFR editions 0-3, since many ADP centres have made extensive use of such values in the past. The international data sub-category introduced with BUFR edition 4 is intended to provide a mechanism for better understanding of the overall nature and intent of messages exchanged between ADP centres. These two values (i.e. local sub-category and international sub-category) are intended to be supplementary to one another, so both may be used within a particular BUFR message.
- (4) When accuracy of the time does not define a time unit, then the value for this unit shall be set to zero (e.g. for a SYNOP observation at 09 UTC, minute = 0, second = 0).
- (5) For Master Table 0, the master table version numbers are as follows:
- 0 Experimental
  - 1 Version implemented on 1 November 1988
  - 2 Version implemented on 1 November 1993
  - 3 Version implemented on 2 November 1994
  - 4 Version implemented on 8 November 1995
  - 5 Version implemented on 6 November 1996
  - 6 Version implemented on 5 November 1997
  - 7 Version implemented on 4 November 1998
  - 8 Version implemented on 3 May 2000
  - 9 Version implemented on 8 November 2000
  - 10 Version implemented on 7 November 2001
  - 11 Version implemented on 5 November 2003
  - 12 Version implemented on 2 November 2005
  - 13 Version implemented on 7 November 2007
  - 14 Version implemented on 4 November 2009
  - 15 Version implemented on 15 September 2010
  - 16 Version implemented on 4 May 2011
  - 17 Version implemented on 2 November 2011
  - 18 Version implemented on 2 May 2012
  - 19 Version implemented on 7 November 2012
  - 20 Version implemented on 8 May 2013
  - 21 Version implemented on 14 November 2014
  - 22 Version implemented on 7 May 2014
  - 23 Pre-operational to be implemented by next amendment

## Section 2 – Optional section

Octet No.	Contents
1–3	Length of section
4	Set to zero (reserved)

5— Reserved for local use by ADP centres

### Section 3 – Data description section

Octet No.	Contents
1–3	Length of section
4	Set to zero (reserved)
5–6	Number of data subsets
7	Bit 1 = 1      Observed data = 0      Other data Bit 2 = 1      Compressed data = 0      Non-compressed data Bits 3–8      Set to zero (reserved)
8–	A collection of element descriptors, replication descriptors, operator descriptors and sequence descriptors, which define the form and contents of individual data elements comprising one data subset in the Data section

Notes:

- (1) The collection of descriptors, beginning at octet 8, is called the “data description”.
- (2) Each descriptor occupies 2 octets and contains 3 parts:

F	X	Y
2 bits	6 bits	8 bits

- (3) If F = 0, the descriptor is an element descriptor. The values of X and Y refer directly to a single entry in Table B, X indicating the class and Y the entry within that class.
- (4) If F = 1, the descriptor is a replication descriptor defining the replication data description operator according to Regulations 94.5.4.1 and 94.5.4.2. The values of X and Y define the scope of the operator and the number of replications, respectively. If Y = 0, delayed replication is defined; the next element descriptor will define a data item giving the number of replications; this descriptor may also indicate (by its value of Y) that the following datum is to be replicated together with the following descriptor.
- (5) If F = 2, the descriptor is an operator descriptor. The value of X indicates an operation in Table C. The meaning of Y depends on the operation.
- (6) If F = 3, the descriptor is a sequence descriptor. The values of X and Y refer directly to a single entry in Table D. Each entry in Table D contains a list of element descriptors, data description operators, and/or sequence descriptors. A sequence descriptor is defined to be equivalent to the corresponding list of descriptors at the Table D entry.
- (7) “Other data”, as identified in octet 7, could, for example, be forecast information generated from a numerical model.

### Section 4 – Data section

Octet No.	Contents
1–3	Length of Data section (octets)
4	Set to zero (reserved)
5–	Binary data as defined by sequence descriptors

Notes:

- (1) The binary data in non-compressed form may be described as follows:

$R_{11}, R_{12}, R_{13}, \dots, R_{1s}$   
 $R_{21}, R_{22}, R_{23}, \dots, R_{2s}$   
 $\dots$   
 $\dots$   
 $\dots$   
 $R_{n1}, R_{n2}, R_{n3}, \dots, R_{ns}$

where  $R_{ij}$  is the  $j^{\text{th}}$  value of the  $i^{\text{th}}$  data subset,  $s$  is the number of values per data subset, and  $n$  is the number of data subsets in the BUFR message; the data subsets each occupy an identical number of bits, unless delayed replication is used, and are *not* necessarily aligned on octet boundaries.

- (2) The binary data in compressed form may be described as follows:

$$R_1^0, \text{NBINC}_1, I_{11}, I_{12}, \dots, I_{1n}$$

$$R_2^0, \text{NBINC}_2, I_{21}, I_{22}, \dots, I_{2n}$$

$$\dots$$

$$\dots$$

$$\dots$$

$$R_s^0, \text{NBINC}_s, I_{s1}, I_{s2}, \dots, I_{sn}$$

where  $R_1^0, R_2^0, \dots, R_s^0$  are local reference values for the set of values for each data element (number of bits as Table B).  $\text{NBINC}_1 \dots \text{NBINC}_s$  contain, as 6-bit quantities, the number of bits occupied by the increments ( $I_{11} \dots I_{1n} \dots I_{s1} \dots I_{sn}$ ).  $s$  is the number of data elements per data subset and  $n$  is the number of data subsets per BUFR message. If  $\text{NBINC}_1 = 0$ , all values of element  $I$  are equal to  $R_1^0$ ; in such cases, the increments shall be omitted. For character data, NBINC shall contain the number of octets occupied by the character element. However, if the character data in all subsets are identical NBINC=0.

- (3) Associated fields are treated as separate data items and precede the data;

e.g.

ASSOCIATED FIELDS	DATA
N bits	M bits

Binary data with associated fields may be described as

follows:

$$A_{11}, R_{11}, A_{12}, R_{12}, \dots, A_{1s}, R_{1s}$$

$$A_{21}, R_{21}, A_{22}, R_{22}, \dots, A_{2s}, R_{2s}$$

$$\dots$$

$$\dots$$

$$\dots$$

$$A_{n1}, R_{n1}, A_{n2}, R_{n2}, \dots, A_{ns}, R_{ns}$$

where  $A_{ij}$   $R_{ij}$  is the  $j^{\text{th}}$  combined associated field value and data value of the  $i^{\text{th}}$  data subset,  $s$  is the number of values per data subset, and  $n$  is the number of data subsets in the BUFR message.

- (4) Binary data in compressed form with associated fields may be described as follows:

$$A_1^0, \text{NBINC}_{A1}, I_{A11}, I_{A12}, \dots, I_{A1n}$$

$$R_1^0, \text{NBINC}_{R1}, I_{R11}, I_{R12}, \dots, I_{R1n}$$

$$\dots$$

$$\dots$$

$$\dots$$

$$A_s^0, \text{NBINC}_{As}, I_{As1}, I_{As2}, \dots, I_{Asn}$$

$$R_s^0, \text{NBINC}_{Rs}, I_{Rs1}, I_{Rs2}, \dots, I_{Rsn}$$

where  $A_1^0, R_1^0, \dots, A_s^0, R_s^0$  are local reference values for the set of associated field values and the set of values for each data element.

$R^0$  uses bit length from Table B.  $A^0$  uses bit length from descriptor 2 04 YYY.

## Section 5 – End section

Octet No.	Contents
1–4	7777 (coded according to the CCITT International Alphabet No. 5)

**Editorial note:** click following links to respective chapters in separate files.

## BUFR TABLES, CODE TABLES AND FLAG TABLES

FM 94 BUFR refers to three types of tables: BUFR tables, code tables and flag tables.

### BUFR tables

Tables containing information used to describe, classify and define the contents of a BUFR message are called BUFR tables. Four BUFR tables are defined: Tables A, B, C and D. Entry numbering shall be the same in BUFR tables and CREX tables (see definition of FM 95 CREX in Part C, Common Features to Binary and Alphanumeric Codes) for the same entity represented. Table B entries shall be listed in the common BUFR/CREX Table B. Table D common sequences shall not be defined in both BUFR Table D and CREX Table D, unless otherwise a conversion between both Tables D is not simple, that is, the conversion is not completed by simple replacement of part “F” of each descriptor. A new BUFR Table D sequence shall be assigned a number not used by any CREX Table D sequence. Similarly, if a CREX Table D sequence is not defined in BUFR Table D, it shall be assigned a number not used by any BUFR sequence.

[BUFR Table A - Data category](#)

[BUFR/CREX Table B - Classification of elements](#)

[BUFR Table C - Data description operators](#)

[BUFR Table D - List of common sequences](#)

### Code tables and flag tables

BUFR Table B defines some elements by means of code tables or flag tables. Within this general description are included code tables referenced by code figures, and flag tables where each bit is set to 0 or 1 to indicate a false or true value with respect to a specific criterion. The concept of a flag table is especially useful where combinations of criteria are represented. Within BUFR, all code tables and flag tables refer to elements defined within BUFR Table B; they are numbered according to the X and Y values of the corresponding Table B reference.

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