

Winter Season Watches, Warnings and Advisories

Winter Weather Preparedness Week in the Tri-state area continues today with a review of the criteria used by the National Weather Service when issuing watches, warnings and advisories.

Watches are issued when hazardous winter weather conditions are possible within the next 12 to 48 hours, but the timing, intensity, or occurrence may still be uncertain.

Warnings are issued when hazardous winter weather is occurring, or is expected to occur within the next 12-36 hours. Warnings are generally reserved for situations which will become life-threatening.

Advisories are issued when hazardous winter weather will cause significant inconveniences, and if caution is not exercised, could lead to life-threatening situations.

Warning Criteria

Blizzard warning: When the following conditions are expected for at least 3 hours, sustained winds or frequent gusts of 35 mph or greater, considerable falling and/or blowing snow lowering visibility to less than one quarter mile.

Heavy snow warning: Snow accumulations of 6 inches/12 hours or 8 inches/24 hours.

Sleet warning: Sleet accumulations over one half inch.

Ice storm warning: Damaging freezing rain accumulations of one quarter inch or more.

Winter storm warning: When a mixture of snow, sleet or ice accumulations will exceed the warning thresholds listed above.

High wind warning: Sustained winds of 40 mph for at least 1 hour, or wind gusts to 58 mph for any duration.

Wind chill warning: Wind chills below -25 degrees fahrenheit.

Advisory Criteria

Snow advisory: Snow accumulations of 3 to 5 inches, although early in the season an advisory may be issued for lesser accumulations.

Blowing snow advisory: Blowing snow reducing visibility to between one quarter and one mile.

Sleet advisory: Sleet accumulations under one half inch.

Freezing rain advisory: Any light freezing rain or freezing drizzle accumulations.

Winter weather advisory: When a mixture of snow, sleet or ice accumulations will exceed advisory thresholds listed above.

Wind advisory: Sustained winds of 30 mph for at least 3 hours, or wind gusts to 45 mph for any duration.

Wind chill advisory: Wind chill values of -15 to -25 degrees fahrenheit.

Dense fog advisory: Widespread fog reducing visibility to one quarter mile or less.

This is Winter Weather Preparedness Week in the Tri-state area. Now is the time to get prepared for winter weather.