

...National Weather Service Severe Weather Products and What They Mean...

The National Weather Service (NWS) uses specific terminology to relay the weather threat to the public in the fastest way possible. In the spring and summer, there are a variety of watches, warnings, and statements you need to understand in order to be prepared. Keep these in mind as we approach Severe Weather Season:

TORNADO WATCH - Means that conditions are favorable for tornadoes to develop. It is normally issued for 4 to 6 hours, and can include many counties. If you are in or near the Tornado Watch area, stay informed with NOAA Weather Radio, commercial radio, or television.

TORNADO WARNING - Means that a tornado has been sighted, or a developing tornado is reported by trained spotters or indicated on Doppler radar. A warning is typically issued for a small area for less than an hour. If a Tornado Warning is issued for your area, take cover immediately!

SEVERE THUNDERSTORM WATCH - Means that conditions are favorable for thunderstorms to produce large hail or damaging winds. These watches are normally issued for 4 to 6 hours at a time, and for a large number of counties. Once again, if you are in or near the Severe Thunderstorm Watch area, stay informed with NOAA Weather Radio, commercial radio, or television.

SEVERE THUNDERSTORM WARNING - Means that a severe thunderstorm has been detected by Doppler radar, or by a trained spotter. Severe thunderstorms produce wind gusts to 58 mph or stronger, or hail 3/4 inch in diameter or larger. Take cover quickly if a severe thunderstorm approaches you, or if one is reported in your area.

SEVERE WEATHER STATEMENT - The Severe Weather Statement is a follow-up to Tornado and Severe Thunderstorm Warnings. These statements inform you of the current status of a tornado or severe thunderstorm. In addition, it gives the history of a storm, where it is moving, and who it will affect. This NWS product is also used to cancel or expire a warning.

FLASH FLOOD WATCH - This is issued when heavy rain may develop and result in flash flooding in or near the watch area. A Flash Flood Watch will also be issued if ground, river/stream conditions, or radar surveillance indicate flash flooding is possible, but not imminent within a designated area.

FLASH FLOOD WARNING - Means flash flooding has developed or is imminent in the area. When a Flash Flood Warning is issued, move to higher ground immediately!

HAZARDOUS WEATHER OUTLOOK - A product issued by the NWS to discuss the significant weather of the day, or possibly next 2 days. It describes potential weather hazards for an area, and is especially created for trained spotters and Emergency Managers. The Hazardous Weather Outlook will detail the type of severe weather expected (if any), timing, and expected location of the severe weather.