

Winter Weather

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Programs and Services of the
National Weather Service



Outlooks

| Product | Issuance |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Gridded Forecasts | No snow amounts beyond 48 hours |
| Hazardous Outlook | 24 hours (more frequently if necessary) |
| Forecast Discussions | 6 hours (or more frequently) |
| Special Weather Statement | Anytime – weather driven |
| Graphical Forecasts | Depends on situation and forecaster discretion |

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|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|
| 7 days before | 6 days before | 5 days before | 4 days before | 3 days before | 2 days before | 1 day before | Day of event |
|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|



Watch

| Product | Issuance |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Forecaster Confidence | 50% or greater chance of occurrence |
| Gridded Forecasts | No snow amounts beyond 48 hours |
| Hazardous Outlook | Every 24 hours (more frequently if necessary) |
| Forecast Discussions | 6 hours (or more frequently) |
| Special Weather Statement | Anytime – weather driven |
| Graphical Forecasts | Issued at forecaster discretion |
| Web-based Briefings | Forecaster discretion and impact dependent. Offered to Emergency Managers. |

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| 7 days before | 6 days before | 5 days before | 4 days before | 3 days before | 2 days before | 1 day before | Day of event |
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Watch

| Type | Criteria |
|-------------------------|--|
| Blizzard | Potential for sustained wind or frequent gusts ≥ 35 mph AND Visibility $< 1/4$ mi in snow and/or blowing snow for ≥ 3 hours in the next 12 to 48 hours |
| Lake Effect Snow | Potential for localized or widespread Lake Effect accumulation ≥ 6 " in 12 hrs or ≥ 8 " in 24 hrs |
| Winter Storm | Potential for snow accumulation: ≥ 6 " in 12 hrs or ≥ 8 " in 24 hours, combination of Snow, Sleet and Freezing Rain Meeting Warning Criteria, and/or Blowing and Drifting Snow Approaching Blizzard Conditions; Mixed Precipitation (lesser amounts if mixed precipitation) Wind Chill ≤ -25 °F & winds ≥ 10 mph |
| Wind Chill | Potential for wind chill ≤ -25 °F and winds ≥ 10 MPH |
| Freeze | Potential for temperatures < 32 °F between May 1 and October 20 |
| High Wind | Potential for sustained non-convective wind ≥ 40 mph for ≥ 1 hour and/or gusts ≥ 58 mph |

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Advisory

| Product | Issuance |
|---------------------------|--|
| Forecaster Confidence | 80% or greater chance of occurrence |
| Gridded Forecasts | No snow amounts beyond 48 hours |
| Hazardous Outlook | 24 hours (more frequently if necessary) |
| Forecast Discussions | 6 hours (or more frequently) |
| Special Weather Statement | Anytime – weather driven |
| Graphical Forecasts | Frequent updates as before and during event |
| Web-based Briefings | Not likely, but offered to Emergency Managers on an as needed basis. |

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Winter Weather Advisory

| Type | Criteria |
|-----------------------|---|
| Blowing Snow | Widespread visibility < ¼ mile in blowing snow |
| Sleet | Sleet Accumulation < 1/2 inches |
| Heavy Snow | 3 to 5 inches; can be 2 to 4 inches (forecaster discretion) |
| Frost Advisory | Formation of frost between May 1 and October 20 |
| Freezing Rain | Light ice accrual generally < ¼ of an inch on all surfaces |
| Freezing Fog | Very light ice accumulation from freezing fog |
| Winter Weather | Combination of any winter advisory hazards |

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Event Specific Advisory

| Type | Criteria |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Freezing Rain Advisory | Light ice accrual generally < ¼ of an inch on all surfaces |
| Lake Effect Snow Advisory | 3" - 5" inches of lake effect snow in 12 hours (forecaster discretion 2" - 4") |
| Wind Advisory | Sustained non-convective wind between 30 and 39 mph for > 1 hour and/or gusts between 45 – 57 mph. |
| Wind Chill Advisory | Wind chill -15 °F to -24 °F AND winds > 10 mph |

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|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|



Warning

| Product | Issuance |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Forecaster Confidence | 80% or greater chance of occurrence |
| Gridded Forecasts | No snow amounts beyond 48 hours |
| Hazardous Outlook | Every 24 hours (more frequently if necessary) |
| Forecast Discussions | 6 hours (or more frequently) |
| Special Weather Statement | Anytime – weather driven |
| Graphical Forecasts | Frequency of updates increases as the event gets closer |
| Web-Based Briefings | Offered to Emergency Managers on an as needed basis; likely for significant impact events. |

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Warning

| Type | Criteria |
|-------------------------|---|
| Blizzard | Sustained wind or frequent gusts ≥ 35 mph AND Visibility $< \frac{1}{4}$ mile from snow or blowing Snow <i>Conditions must exist for 3 hours or longer</i> |
| Lake Effect Snow | Localized or widespread Lake Effect snow accumulation ≥ 6 " in 12 hrs or ≥ 8 " in 24 hrs |
| Ice Storm | Ice accumulation $> \frac{1}{4}$ " with damage |
| Winter Storm | Combination of any winter warning hazards, including significant blowing and drifting snow below blizzard conditions (lesser amounts may be warranted especially if significant mixed precipitation in an early or late season event) |
| Wind Chill | Wind Chill $< -25^{\circ}\text{F}$ and winds > 10 mph |
| Freeze | Temperatures $< 32^{\circ}\text{F}$ between May 1 and October 20 |
| High Wind | Sustained non-convective wind ≥ 40 mph for ≥ 1 hour and/or gusts ≥ 58 mph |

7 days
before

6 days
before

5 days
before

4 days
before

3 days
before

2 days
before

1 day
before

Day of
event

Final Thoughts?

- It is better to be prepared for an opportunity and not have one than to have an opportunity and not be prepared. — *Whitney M. Young, Jr.*