

# Definitions of Winter Weather Terms used by the National Weather Service

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As winter approaches, you should understand winter weather terms and be aware of winter weather hazards. The National Weather Service uses several terms to tell you exactly what kind of weather to expect, please review the terms below to familiarize yourself with them.

## 1) **WINTER STORM OUTLOOK**

This is a statement issued when there is a chance of a major winter storms from 3 to 5 days in the future. This is meant to assist people with their long range plans. However, since the outlook is issued so far in advance, the accuracy of the prediction may be limited.

## 2) **WINTER STORM WATCH**

This means there may be hazardous winter weather due to various elements such as heavy snow, sleet, or ice accumulation from freezing rain. In our region, heavy snow means 7 inches or more of accumulation in 24 hours or less. A "WATCH" is a long range prediction. They are issued at least 12 hours before the hazardous winter weather is expected to begin. When the storm becomes imminent, or has a high probability of occurring, the watch will be upgraded to a "WARNING".

## 3) **WINTER STORM WARNING FOR HEAVY SNOW**

Seven inches or more of snow will fall within a 24 hour period.

## 4) **WINTER STORM WARNING FOR SEVERE ICING**

Heavy accumulation of ice due to freezing rain will down trees and power lines. Electricity, or telephone communications, may be out for a long period of time. Roads may become impassable for most vehicles.

## 5) **BLIZZARD WARNING**

This is issued for a combination of strong winds averaging or frequently gusting to, or above, 35 miles an hour and very low visibility due to blowing or falling snow. These are the most dangerous winter storms and can be especially severe when combined with temperatures below 10 degrees.

## 6) **WINTER STORM WARNING**

This is issued when a dangerous combination of heavy snow, with sleet and/or freezing rain, will occur or has a high probability of occurring within the next 12 hours.

## 7) **HIGH WIND WARNING**

This means the expected winds will average 40 miles an hour or more for at least 1 hour or winds gusts will be greater than 58 miles an hour. Trees and power lines can be blown down. A High Wind Warning may be preceded by a HIGH WIND WATCH if the strong winds are not expected to occur for at least 12 hours.

## 8) **WIND CHILL WARNING**

This means life threatening cold with wind chill temperatures computed to be -40 degrees or less for at least 3 hours. Exposure to this combination of strong winds and low temperatures without protective clothing will quickly lead to frostbite and/or hypothermia. Longer exposures can be fatal.

## 9) **WINTER WEATHER ADVISORY FOR SNOW**

This is issued for snowfall greater than 4 (but less than 7) inches in a 24 hour period. The snowfall is usually expected to begin within the next 12 hours.

## 10) **BLOWING SNOW ADVISORY**

This is issued when the visibility will be significantly reduced, or when the roads become snow covered over a large area.

## 11) **WIND CHILL ADVISORY**

This is issued for cold temperatures and winds, with wind chill temperatures computed to be -25 degrees or less for at least 3 hours. Exposure to this combination of strong winds and low temperatures without protective clothing can lead to frostbite and/or hypothermia, Prolonged exposure may be fatal.

## 12) **WINTER WEATHER ADVISORY**

This is issued for a combination of snow, sleet, and/or freezing rain. Advisories, in general, are issued for weather conditions that are expected to cause significant inconveniences and may be hazardous, These situations are normally not life threatening if caution is exercised.

## 13) **WIND ADVISORY**

This is issued for average wind speeds between 31 and 39 miles an hour, or for frequent wind gusts between 46 and 57 miles an hour.