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Public Information Statement 21-12  
National Weather Service Headquarters Silver Spring MD  
1100 AM EST Thu Mar 4 2021

To:           Subscribers:  
              -NOAA Weather Wire Service  
              -Emergency Managers Weather Information Network  
              -NOAAPort  
              Other NWS Partners, Users and Employees

From:        Eli Jacks, Chief  
              NWS Forecast Services Division

Subject: Planned Major Change to NWS' Hazard Messaging Headlines no earlier than Calendar Year 2024

The NWS will be implementing changes to its hazard messaging headlines no earlier than calendar year 2024. This decision is based on results of extensive social science research with partners and the public, which documented significant confusion with current NWS headline terms.

This research indicated that NWS' "Advisory" headlines are responsible for a major portion of the confusion. This is because the Advisory term itself is misunderstood and its meaning is often conflated with that of "Watch." Such confusion can lead to a misunderstanding of forecast severity and certainty with respect to significant weather and water hazards. This, in turn, can adversely impact user preparation for (and response to) these hazards.

The major changes are as follows:

- All "Advisory" headlines within what is currently the NWS Watch, Warning and Advisory system will be discontinued. Most of the current Advisory headlines will be replaced with plain language headlines that clearly articulate the nature of the hazard. However, these messages will still be equipped with computer-readable Valid Time Event Code (VTEC) as they are today.
- Exceptions to the transition to plain language will apply to Tsunami and Small Craft Advisories. These Advisories will be elevated to the Warning level due to the life-threatening conditions associated with these hazards. The exact title of the Warning for what is now a Tsunami Advisory is to be determined.
- All "Special Weather Statements" (SPS') will be discontinued, also in favor of plain language headlines. In addition, these converted messages will, for the first time, be equipped with computer-readable VTEC and placed in a bulleted "What, Where, When, Impacts" format.

The exact language to be used in the plain language headlines for each affected hazard is still to be determined. NWS will host partner

webinars and collect public feedback via online surveys during 2021 to inform development of plain language headlines. Additional Public Information Statements will be issued in the coming weeks to announce these feedback opportunities.

A slide set highlighting public and partner feedback supporting this decision and providing case examples demonstrating how the messages will change is at this link:

[https://www.weather.gov/media/notification/haz\\_simp\\_slides.pdf](https://www.weather.gov/media/notification/haz_simp_slides.pdf)

A set of frequently asked questions with responses as it relates to the planned changes is provided here:

[https://www.weather.gov/media/notification/haz\\_simp\\_faq\\_sheet.pdf](https://www.weather.gov/media/notification/haz_simp_faq_sheet.pdf)

Additional details on the change may be found on the "Revamp Progress" tab of the project website. Detailed reports on the numerous social science-based engagements may be found in the "Reference Materials" tab:

<https://www.weather.gov/hazardsimplification/>

Prior to implementation, there will be other messaging improvements to consolidate, reformat, realign and rename messages for specific hazards ahead of the major change. A draft calendar of these planned changes is provided at this link:

[https://www.weather.gov/media/notification/haz\\_simp\\_calendar\\_2021.pdf](https://www.weather.gov/media/notification/haz_simp_calendar_2021.pdf)

Individual Service Change Notices will be sent to specify the exact dates for each of these changes.

Questions and comments can be directed to the NWS Hazard Simplification Team at:

[hazsimp@noaa.gov](mailto:hazsimp@noaa.gov)

National Public Information Statements are online at:

<https://www.weather.gov/notification/>

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