

WINTER WEATHER TERMS

It can sometimes be confusing when the local weatherman starts tossing around different terms to describe the upcoming winter weather conditions. Here are a few terms to help you decipher between the warnings, watches and advisories.

Watches

Winter Storm Watch - Issued for the possibility of severe life-threatening winter weather conditions including: heavy snow, heavy ice and/or near blizzard conditions. Forecasters are typically 50 percent confident that severe winter weather will materialize when a watch is issued.

Blizzard Watch - Issued for the possibility of blizzard conditions. Forecasters are typically 50 percent confident that blizzard conditions will materialize when a blizzard watch is issued.

Lake Effect Snow Watch - Issued for the potential for heavy lake effect snow. **Wind Chill Watch** - Issued for the potential of wind chills of -25F or less, which can cause rapid frostbite and increase the risk of hypothermia.

Warnings

Winter Storm Warning - Issued for a combination of heavy snow and/or ice, of which, at least one exceeds or meets warning criteria. Winter weather is expected to cause life-threatening public impact for a combination of winter hazards including heavy snow, ice, near blizzard conditions, blowing and drifting snow and/or dangerous wind chills.

Heavy Snow Warning - Issued when 7 inches or more of snow is expected in 12 hours or less, or 9 inches or more is expected in 24 hours or less. Heavy Snow Warnings are issued when there is a high degree of confidence that the entire event will be snow.

Ice Storm Warning - Issued for a ½ inch or more of ice accumulation which causes damage to power lines and trees. Ice Storm Warnings are issued when there is a high degree of confidence that the entire event is expected to be ice.

Blizzard Warning - Issued when blizzard conditions are imminent or expected in the next 12 to 24 hours. Blizzard conditions include sustained or frequent gusts \geq 35 mph AND considerable falling, blowing and drifting of snow reducing visibilities frequently 1/4 mile.

Lake Effect Snow Warning - Issued for 7 inches or more of lake effect snow.

Wind Chill Warning - Issued when the wind chill is expected to be -25F or less. Frostbite can occur in less than 10 minutes.

Advisories

Winter Weather Advisory - Issued for a hazardous combination of snow, and ice of which neither meets nor exceeds warning criteria. Issued for winter weather that will cause significant inconveniences or could be life threatening if the proper precautions are not taken.

Snow Advisory - Issued when an average of 4 to 6 inches of snow is expected in 12 hours or less. Snow advisories are issued when there is a high degree of confidence that the entire event will be snow.

Freezing Rain Advisory - Any accumulation of freezing rain that can make roads slippery.

Freezing rain advisories will only be issued when there is a high degree of confidence that the entire event will be freezing rain only.

Snow and Blowing Snow Advisory - Sustained wind or frequent gusts of 25 to 34 mph accompanied by falling and blowing snow, occasionally reducing visibility to a 1/4 mile or less for three hours or more. Blowing Snow Advisory - Widespread or localized blowing snow reducing visibilities to a 1/4 or less with winds less than 35 mph.

Lake Effect Snow Advisory - Issued for an average of 4 to 6 inches of lake effect snow. **Wind Chill Advisory** - Issued for wind chills of -15F to -24F. Frostbite can occur in less than 30 minutes.

Source: New York State Emergency Management