

Product Description Document
Hazard Simplification Final Proposal: Discontinuance of Advisory, Special Weather Statement, and Short Term Forecast Headlines

06/09/2020

Part 1 – Mission Connection

a) Product Description:

This proposal represents the core outcome of the National Weather Service (NWS) Hazard Simplification (Haz Simp) project. The Haz Simp project was initiated to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the Watch, Warning, and Advisory (WWA) system and propose potential improvements. Extensive social science research involving NWS meteorologists, NWS core partners, and the public found that there are too many WWA products, message formats are inconsistent, and WWA headlines can be confusing. In particular, the “Advisory” headline was found to be widely misunderstood and even conflated with “Watch”.

Based on this research, NWS is now proposing a major change to the WWA system. The proposed new system would discontinue the current “Advisory,” “Special Weather Statement (SPS),” and “Short Term Forecast (NOW)” headlines. In their place, NWS would use generic, plain language statements to convey information for lower-level hazardous events that are not expected to reach “Watch” or “Warning” levels. Current “Watch” and “Warning” products would remain unchanged.

These new statements would:

- Convey information that doesn’t reach “Watch” or “Warning” levels
- Describe threats using plain language headlines
- Adopt the "What, Where, When, Impacts" bulleted format
- Gain Valid Time Event Codes (VTEC) with a significance code of ".S" to enable machine readability of this information
- Enable forecaster editing of Common Alerting Protocol (CAP) Urgency, Severity, Certainty (USC) elements to more effectively convey severity and certainty of the threat

b) Purpose/Intended Use:

The intended use of the new statement will be to convey information that doesn’t reach “Watch” or “Warning” levels, which was previously covered by the “Advisory,” “SPS,” and “NOW” headlines.

This proposed new system would improve many aspects of the hazard messaging system. The current “SPS” and “NOW” products, which are disseminated for a variety of situations, are not machine-readable and, therefore, have limited reach. In the new paradigm, all products would have VTEC for more effective ingestion by NWS partners. Currently, “Advisory,” “SPS,” and “NOW” product formats vary (paragraph, bulleted); in the proposed system, all statements would have a consistent bulleted format.

The proposed system would leverage the body of the message and forecaster-editable CAP USC elements to more effectively convey severity and certainty. Also, the proposed plain language statement would feature a simpler cancellation process. If a statement needed to be cancelled because a “Warning” is needed instead, the cancellation would be indicated in the VTEC line of the message. However, the cancellation would be done “silently” from a headline language perspective, meaning there would be no cancellation headline to potentially confuse users (as the threat has not ended, but rather has increased and now warrants a “Warning”).

c) Audience/Users:

The target audiences for these products are customers and partners such as emergency managers, state and local officials including School Superintendents, Departments of Transportation (DOTs), media and the general public. This change would be adopted by all Weather Forecast Offices (WFO).

d) Presentation Format:

These are text-based products, which appear on the Watch, Warning, and Advisory map on weather.gov and all other standard dissemination methods.

e) Feedback Method:

A public survey is available here: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/publichazsimp> and will be open from June 11, 2020 through August 21, 2020.

For further information, please contact:

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Part 2 – Technical Description

a) Format and Science Basis:

The following link provides a *draft* set of guiding principles for the new plain language statement, including a number of proposed uses and technical requirements for the product. If the proposal is approved, additional internal and external coordination will be conducted to refine elements of these principles consistent with forecaster and partner needs:

https://www.weather.gov/media/notification/ref/Statement_Guiding_Principles.pdf

An example of an Advisory, SPS, and NOW, each transitioned into the proposed statement, is shown below. Certain text is highlighted yellow to show how the current products would change; this highlight is for display purposes only and is not representative of how the text products would actually appear. For a more comprehensive set of examples, see the following links:

Current/Proposed side-by-side examples for each Advisory:

https://www.weather.gov/media/notification/ref/All_Advisory_Examples.pdf

Current/Proposed side-by-side examples for a selection of SPS’:

https://www.weather.gov/media/notification/ref/Additional_SPS_Examples.pdf

Current “Winter Weather Advisory”

231

WWUS43 KMQT 050930

WSWMQT

URGENT - WINTER WEATHER MESSAGE

National Weather Service Marquette MI

430 AM EST Sun Jan 5 2020

MIZ001-003-052100-

/O.NEW.KMQT.WW.Y.0001.200105T1700Z-200106T0500Z/

Keweenaw-Northern Houghton-

Including the cities of Copper Harbor, Houghton, and Hancock

430 AM EST Sun Jan 5 2020

...WINTER WEATHER ADVISORY IN EFFECT FROM NOON TODAY TO MIDNIGHT EST TONIGHT...

* WHAT...Snow expected. Total snow accumulations of 2 to 4 inches with most of the snow accumulation occurring before sunset. West

to northwest winds gusting as high as 45 mph late this afternoon and evening.

* WHERE...Keweenaw and Northern Houghton Counties.

* WHEN...From noon today to midnight EST tonight.

* IMPACTS...Plan on slippery road conditions. Considerable blowing and drifting snow will develop late this afternoon and evening, significantly reducing visibility.

PRECAUTIONARY/PREPAREDNESS ACTIONS...

Slow down and use caution while traveling.

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Proposed "statement" product

231

WWUS43 KMQT 050930

WSWMQT

Winter Weather Message

National Weather Service Marquette MI

430 AM EST Sun Jan 5 2020

MIZ001-003-052100-

/O.NEW.KMQT.WW.S.0001.200105T1700Z-200106T0500Z/

Keweenaw-Northern Houghton-

Including the cities of Copper Harbor, Houghton, and Hancock

430 AM EST Sun Jan 5 2020

...2 to 4 inches of snow expected from noon today to midnight EST tonight...

* WHAT...Snow expected. Total snow accumulations of 2 to 4 inches with most of the snow accumulation occurring before sunset. West to northwest winds gusting as high as 45 mph late this afternoon and evening.

* WHERE...Keweenaw and Northern Houghton Counties.

* WHEN...From noon today to midnight EST tonight.

* IMPACTS...Plan on slippery road conditions. Considerable blowing and drifting snow will develop late this afternoon and evening, significantly reducing visibility.

PRECAUTIONARY/PREPAREDNESS ACTIONS...

Slow down and use caution while traveling.

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Current "Special Weather Statement"

SPSCLE

Special Weather Statement

National Weather Service Cleveland OH
212 AM EDT Thu Jun 6 2019

OHZ010>014-020>023-089-PAZ001>003-060900-
Lorain-Cuyahoga-Lake-Geauga-Ashtabula Inland-Medina-Summit-
Portage-Trumbull-Ashtabula Lakeshore-Northern Erie-Southern Erie-Crawford-
Including the cities of Lorain, Cleveland, Mentor, Chardon, Jefferson, Medina,
Akron, Ravenna, Warren, Ashtabula, Erie, Edinboro, and Meadville
212 AM EDT Thu Jun 6 2019

...Areas of fog across the area overnight...

Areas of fog will be in place across the area overnight. Most areas will have visibility of one half mile to one mile. Localized areas of a quarter of a mile or less visibility is possible. Motorists should use caution and be ready for rapidly changing visibility.

Proposed "statement" product

NPWCLE

Weather Message

National Weather Service Cleveland OH
212 AM EDT Thu Jun 6 2019

OHZ010>014-020>023-089-PAZ001>003-060900-
/O.NEW.KCLE.FG.S.0001.190606T0612Z-190606T1300Z/
Lorain-Cuyahoga-Lake-Geauga-Ashtabula Inland-Medina-Summit-
Portage-Trumbull-Ashtabula Lakeshore-Northern Erie-Southern Erie-Crawford-
Including the cities of Lorain, Cleveland, Mentor, Chardon, Jefferson, Medina,
Akron, Ravenna, Warren, Ashtabula, Erie, Edinboro, and Meadville
212 AM EDT Thu Jun 6 2019

...Areas of fog across the area overnight...

* **WHAT**...Areas of fog with visibility of one half mile to one mile. Localized areas of a quarter of a mile or less.

* **WHERE**...Northeastern Ohio to Northwestern Pennsylvania

* **WHEN**...Overnight and into the early morning

* IMPACTS...Reduced visibility could make travel difficult.

PRECAUTIONARY/PREPAREDNESS ACTIONS...

Motorists should use caution and be ready for rapidly changing visibility.

Current "Short Term Forecast"

NOWBUF

Short Term Forecast

National Weather Service Buffalo NY
854 AM EST Mon Nov 20 2017

NYZ012-019>021-085-201600-
Wyoming-Chautauqua-Cattaraugus-Allegany-Southern Erie-
Including the cities of Warsaw, Jamestown, Olean, Wellsville,
Orchard Park, and Springville
854 AM EST Mon Nov 20 2017

.NOW...

The short term forecast for Southern Erie and Wyoming counties
and the western Southern Tier.

Areas of light snow will persist through the afternoon for
portions of the Western Southern Tier, Wyoming and Southern Erie
counties. Up to an additional inch of accumulation will be
possible through the afternoon.

If traveling use caution and allow extra time to reach your
destination. Area roadways may be slippery due to snow
accumulation.

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Proposed "statement" product

WSWBUF

Winter Weather Message

National Weather Service Buffalo NY
854 AM EST Mon Nov 20 2017

NYZ012-019>021-085-201600-
/O.NEW.KBUF.WW.S.0001.171120T1254Z-171120T1600Z/
Wyoming-Chautauqua-Cattaraugus-Allegany-Southern Erie-

Including the cities of Warsaw, Jamestown, Olean, Wellsville,
Orchard Park, and Springville
854 AM EST Mon Nov 20 2017

...Areas of light snow will persist through the afternoon...

* WHAT...Areas of light snow with accumulations up to an inch.

* WHERE...Western Southern Tier, Wyoming and Southern Erie counties

* WHEN...Through the afternoon

* IMPACTS...Slippery roads could make travel difficult.

PRECAUTIONARY/PREPAREDNESS ACTIONS...

If traveling use caution and allow extra time to reach your destination. Area roadways may be slippery due to snow accumulation.

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b) Training:

Prior to implementation of the new system, the Haz Simp team will work with the Office of the Chief Learning Officer (OCLO) to develop generalized and service-focused training to support the transition. This training will be available on the Commerce Learning Center (CLC) website.

c) Availability:

These products will be available at all times and issued when criteria are met.