

Weather Watch vs. Warning vs. Advisory vs. Outlook

What is the DIFFERENCE?

The National Weather Service uses a four-tier approach to alert the public to weather hazards. These included outlooks, advisories, watches, and warnings. With an outlook as being least threatening to a warning being the most threatening.

OUTLOOK: This is ranked as the least threatening, with hazardous weather occurring within the next 3 to 7 days. When an Outlook is issued, you should monitor the weather situation for updates.

ADVISORIES: Are ranked as less threatening, with weather conditions being less severe but could cause a significant inconvenience. When an Advisory is issued, you should exercise caution.

The expected weather condition has a pretty good chance of occurring, even a likely chance of occurring, but typically an advisory is used for less severe types of weather conditions. A Wind Advisory might be issued, or a Freezing Rain Advisory issued instead of a High Wind Warning or an Ice Storm Warning.

WATCHES: Are ranked more serious, there is an increased risk of a hazardous weather event, but its occurrence, location, or timing is still uncertain. When a Watch is issued, you should listen for further information and plan, prepare if the danger materializes. Watches essentially mean there is a chance this condition will happen and usually covers a large geographical area for a lengthy period of time.

WARNINGS: Are ranked the most serious of alerts; this means a hazardous weather event is occurring, imminent, or likely, and a threat to life or property exists. When a Warning is issued, you should take action immediately to protect life and property—more definite time periods.

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