

Weather Service Proposes Change to Winter Weather Wording

Wednesday, 27 February 2013

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Brianna Gibbs/KMXT

The National Weather Service is changing some of its language related to winter weather, or at least proposing to do so. Aimee Fish is the acting warning coordination meteorologist for the Anchorage Forecast Office with the National Weather Service and said the hope is to simplify wording to make important weather information more understandable.

-- (NWS Changes 1 :35 "What we're doing is proposing ... to be changed at all.")

She said the system currently works with the terms watch, warning and advisory, but has been adding additional language since late fall to better convey the weather happenings.

-- (NWS Changes 2 :47 "I'll give you an example for an ... or occurring.")

The current language, the one the service is proposing to change, requires individuals to understand the difference between a watch, warning and advisory. In general, Fish said watches means the weather service is on the look out for potentially dangerous winter weather. Warnings mean hazardous winter weather is either occurring, or highly likely. Advisories are similar to warnings, but less extreme and more of a caution. She said many people don't know these definitions, and that's why they are offering the additional wording, and possibly switching to that wording permanently.

-- (NWS Changes 3 :48 "So what we are doing is trying ... public as possible.")

She said the push to change the language is national, and only related to winter weather.

-- (NWS Changes 4 :30 “Currently there are 26 offices … offices in Alaska.”)

The opportunity to provide feedback online ends March 31. From there, Fish said the weather service will compile and individually evaluate all of the comments. If the feedback suggests people favor the new language, it will then be up to the leaders of the National Weather Service to decide whether or not to pursue it permanently. Fish said it will most likely start being used at a few weather offices on an experimental basis before it is implemented nationwide.

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