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Public Information Statement 20-49
National Weather Service Headquarters Silver Spring, MD
1000 AM EDT Tue Jun 30 2020

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From: Michelle Hawkins, Chief
 Severe, Fire, Public, and Winter Weather Services Branch

Subject: Seeking Public Comment through July 30, 2020 on the
Proposed Use of Impact-Based Damage Threat Categories in NWS
Severe Thunderstorm Warnings

The National Weather Service (NWS) is collecting comments through July 30, 2020 on the proposed addition of Impact-Based Warning (IBW) damage threat categories in Severe Thunderstorm Warnings (SVR). The proposed changes are similar to the current operational format for Tornado Warnings (TOR) and Flash Flood Warnings (FFW). In the case of SVRs, machine-readable IBW coded damage threat tags would be assigned one of two threat-level categories. Each category would be associated with a minimum threshold of either hail and/or thunderstorm wind. These coded threat tags would appear below the double ampersand (&&) and just below the supplemental polygon location and storm motion information portion of the alphanumeric/text product.

The container in SVRs for these proposed damage threat categories is the "THUNDERSTORM DAMAGE THREAT" IBW coded tag. This tag mirrors the "TORNADO DAMAGE THREAT" within TORs and would be set to either "CONSIDERABLE" or "DESTRUCTIVE", depending on hail size and/or wind magnitude. The highest-level category would appear in the tag line, even if both categories are reached.

Similar to TORs, the base-level SVRs have the lowest tier hail/wind criteria and will not invoke these categories or the damage threat tag. Base-level SVRs will only provide the wind and hail amounts as they appear in the current operational product. SVRs that contain either of the proposed damage threat tags would be based on the following minimum trigger criteria:

- CONSIDERABLE...1.75 inch diameter hail (golf ball-sized) and/or 70 mph thunderstorm winds.
- DESTRUCTIVE...2.75 inch diameter hail (baseball-sized) and/or 80 mph thunderstorm winds.

These proposed changes would also be incorporated into the Severe Weather Statement (SVS), which serves as the official update/follow-up alphanumeric product for SVRs.

Warnings with the "DESTRUCTIVE" tag would be recommended to activate a Wireless Emergency Alert (WEA) to mobile devices through the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA's) Integrated Public Alert Warning System (IPAWS). This added capability is aimed at promoting instant and immediate life preservation actions for this level of hail and/or wind threat. If added into the FEMA IPAWS suite of NWS warnings, a WEA would be activated for any SVR or update SVS that carries the "DESTRUCTIVE" tag.

Other changes to the SVR IBW tags include the renaming of the hail and thunderstorm wind gust speed IBW coded tags (HAIL and WIND) to "MAX HAIL SIZE" and "MAX WIND GUST". Also, two new coded tags have been added that will appear in each issuance of the SVR and its updates. These are the "HAIL THREAT" and "WIND THREAT" tags, which will display either "RADAR INDICATED" or "OBSERVED", depending on that selection, linking to the amount in the maximum (MAX) wind/hail tag. No changes will be made to Tornado Warnings with these proposed changes except the tag for "HAIL" being changed to "MAX HAIL SIZE", along with SVRs.

Examples of the proposed Impact-Based Warning (IBW) categories for the Severe Thunderstorm Warning (SVR) are contained document in the link below:

https://nws.weather.gov/products/PDD/PDD_Proposed_SevereThunderstormWarningCategories_2020.pdf

Comments and feedback on these proposed changes may be directed to the NWS via an online survey form at:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ProposedSvrTSWarningCategories>

Please send feedback/comments on this proposed change to Severe Thunderstorm Warnings to Gregory.M.Schoor@noaa.gov, NWS Severe Weather Services Program Leader, by July 30, 2020.

National Public Information Statements are online at:
<https://www.weather.gov/notification/>

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