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Public Information Statement 19-31
National Weather Service Headquarters Washington DC
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To: Subscribers:
 -NOAA Weather Wire Service
 -Emergency Managers Weather Information Network
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From: Mary Mullusky
 Chief, Water Resources Services Branch

Subject: Soliciting Comments on Proposed Changes to Wireless Emergency Alert (WEA) Wording for Flash Flood Warnings until November 10, 2019

The NWS is requesting comments on proposed changes to Wireless Emergency Alert (WEA) Wording for Flash Flood Warnings (FFW) until November 10 2019. Enabling WEA alerting for higher impact Flash Flood Warnings is a secondary step to implementing Impact-based Warnings (IBW) for FFWs.

NWS has been gradually implementing the reformatting of FFWs into IBW format since September 16, 2019. This implementation will be complete by all Weather Forecast Offices by December 2019. This consistent, bulleted format provides easily readable information describing the hazard (Flash Flood in this case), the source of the information (e.g., radar, gage, trained spotter, emergency manager) and a brief description of the hazard impact.

The FFW IBW messages includes machine-readable tags to characterize the flash flood damage threat, source information and causative event. Currently, WEAs are issued for all FFWs. In December, after all NWS forecast offices are issuing FFWs in the IBW format, WEAs only will be issued for FFWs with a damage threat tag of Considerable or Catastrophic. NWS is soliciting feedback on proposed new WEA wording for FFWs with the damage threat tags of Considerable or Catastrophic.

A sample of a proposed WEA Message for FFWs with a FLASH FLOOD DAMAGE THREAT tag of Considerable follows:

English Message (Short)

NWS: FLASH FLOOD WARNING this area til 11:00AM EDT. Avoid flooded areas.

Spanish Message (Short)

SNM: AVISO DE INUNDACIONES REPENTINAS hasta 11:00AM EDT. Evite areas inundadas.

English Message (360 Characters)

National Weather Service: A FLASH FLOOD WARNING is in effect for this area until 11:00AM EDT. This is a dangerous and life-threatening

situation. Do not attempt to travel unless you are fleeing an area subject to flooding or under an evacuation order.

Spanish Message (360 Characters)

Servicio Nacional de Meteorología: AVISO DE INUNDACIONES REPENTINAS en efecto para esta area hasta las 11:00AM EDT. Esta es una situacion peligrosa y amenaza la vida. No intente viajar a menos que sea para abandonar un area propensa a inundaciones o bajo una orden de desalojo.

A sample of a proposed WEA Messages for FFWs with a FLASH FLOOD DAMAGE THREAT tag of Catastrophic follows:

English Message (Short)

NWS: FLASH FLOOD EMERGENCY this area til 11:00AM EDT. Avoid flooded areas.

Spanish Message (Short)

SNM: EMERGENCIA DE INUNDACIONES REPENTINAS hasta 11:00AM EDT. Evite areas inundadas.

English Message (360 Characters)

National Weather Service: A FLASH FLOOD EMERGENCY is in effect for this area until 11:00AM EDT. This is an extremely dangerous and life-threatening situation. Do not attempt to travel unless you are fleeing an area subject to flooding or under an evacuation order.

Spanish Message (360 Characters)

Servicio Nacional de Meteorología: EMERGENCIA DE INUNDACIONES REPENTINAS en efecto para esta area hasta las 11:00AM EDT. Esta es una situacion extremadamente peligrosa y amenaza la vida. No intente viajar a menos que sea para abandonar un area propensa a inundaciones o bajo una orden de desalojo.

There will be no change to the information included in the FFW segment header block, including the Valid Time Event Code (VTEC) and Hydrologic VTEC (H-VTEC) strings nor will there be a change to the criteria for warning dissemination through other systems (e.g., NOAA Weather Radio, Emergency Alert System on radio and TV broadcasts). The characterization of the flash flood damage threat, source information and causative event, along with examples of FFWs in IBW format, are contained in the Product Description Document (PDD) at the link below:

https://nws.weather.gov/products/PDD/IBWforFlashFloods_2019.pdf

WEA is a joint effort between the Federal Communications Commission, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), and the wireless industry that allows emergency alerting authorities to geographically target emergency messages to mobile devices, primarily cell phones. The NWS will provide messages to WEA for hazards believed to be life-threatening and that have consequences that can be mitigated or minimized by immediate action. More information about WEA can be found at:

<https://www.weather.gov/wrn/wea>

More information about the proposed changes to WEA Messages for FFWs can be found in the Product Description Document (PDD) linked below:

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

A Service Change Notice will be sent after reviewing feedback and finalizing the date of this WEA transition. The NWS is accepting comments through November 10, 2019 on the proposed changes to WEA Messages for FFWs.

Please send questions or comments to:

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National Public Information Statements are online at:

<https://www.weather.gov/notification/>

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