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Service Change Notice 17-28  
National Weather Service Headquarters Silver Spring MD  
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From:     Allison Allen  
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Subject: Changing Criteria for Issuing Tropical Cyclone Watches and Warnings to Include Certain Land-threatening Disturbances that are not yet Tropical Cyclones: Effective on or about May 15, 2017

Beginning on or about May 15, 2017, the NWS will have the option to issue watches, warnings, and graphical and textual advisory products for disturbances that are not yet tropical cyclones, but which pose the threat of bringing tropical storm or hurricane conditions to land areas within 48 hours. Under longstanding policy, the NWS has not been permitted to issue a hurricane or tropical storm watch or warning until after a tropical cyclone had formed. Advances in forecasting over the past decade now allow the confident prediction of tropical cyclone impacts while these systems are still in the developmental stage.

For these land-threatening "potential tropical cyclones", the NWS will now issue the full suite of products that previously has been issued only for ongoing tropical, subtropical or post-tropical cyclones. In addition, the NWS will begin issuing watches and warnings for storm surge associated with tropical cyclones threatening the Atlantic and Gulf coasts of the contiguous United States (CONUS) in 2017 and will have the ability to issue these watches and warnings for potential tropical cyclones as well. The Potential Storm Surge Flooding Map and Storm Surge Watch/Warning graphic will also be issued for these systems when appropriate.

Potential tropical cyclones will share the naming conventions currently in place for tropical and subtropical depressions, with depressions and potential tropical cyclones being numbered from a single list (e.g., One, Two, Three, ..., Twenty-Three, etc.). The assigned number will always match the total number of systems (tropical cyclones, subtropical cyclones, or potential tropical cyclones) that have occurred within that basin during the season.

For example, if three systems requiring advisories have already formed within a basin in a given year, the next land-threatening disturbance would be designated Potential Tropical Cyclone Four. If a potential tropical cyclone becomes a tropical depression, its numerical designation remains the same (i.e., Potential Tropical Cyclone Four becomes Tropical Depression Four).

The issuance times for potential tropical cyclone products will be identical to the standard tropical cyclone product issuance times. NWS products for potential tropical cyclones will be issued until watches or warnings are discontinued or until the wind and storm surge, if applicable, threat for land areas sufficiently diminishes, at which point advisories would be discontinued. If, however, it seems likely that new watches or warnings would be necessary within a short period of time (e.g., 6-12 hours), then advisories could continue briefly in the interest of service continuity. Once a system becomes a tropical cyclone, the normal procedure for discontinuing advisories will apply. Potential tropical cyclone advisories will not be issued for systems that pose a threat only to marine areas.

Because NHC and the Central Pacific Hurricane Center will be issuing their normal graphical products depicting the 5-day forecast track and uncertainty cone for potential tropical cyclones, the Graphical Tropical Weather Outlook will no longer display a formation area for these systems to avoid confusion.

If you have questions, please contact:

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