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PNSWSH

Service Change Notice 19-101  
National Weather Service Headquarters Silver Spring MD  
235 PM EST Tue Dec 10 2019

To:           Subscribers:  
              -NOAA Weather Wire Service  
              -Emergency Managers Weather Information Network  
              -NOAAPORT  
              Other NWS partners and NWS employees

From:         Mary Mullusky  
              Chief, Water Resources Services Branch

Subject: Implementation of Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA)  
          Changes for Flash Flood Warnings on or after January 8, 2020

Beginning on or after January 8, 2020, the NWS will issue Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA) for Flash Flood Warnings (FFW) based on damage threat tags.

WEAs will only be sent for FFWs with a damage threat tag of either "considerable" or "catastrophic" using the new 90-character messaging. FFWs labeled with these tags are life-threatening and require urgent action. Because these tags are applied to FFWs relatively rarely, this change will limit the number of FFW WEAs distributed. WEAs will also be issued for Flash Flood Statements that exhibit an increase in damage threat (e.g., base [no tag] to considerable, base [no tag] to catastrophic, and considerable to catastrophic).

This change will not affect key information in the FFW segment header block, including the Valid Time Event Code (VTEC) and Hydrologic VTEC (H-VTEC) strings, nor will it affect changes to the existing criteria for warning dissemination. All FFWs will still be issued and distributed via NOAA Weather Radio, the Emergency Alert System, on radio and TV broadcasts, Weather.gov and through dissemination systems to our emergency managers and partners. Information about the specific changes to WEA Messages for FFWs can be found in the Product Description Document (PDD):

[https://nws.weather.gov/products/PDD/PDD\\_OplWirelessEmergencyAlertMessages\\_forFlashFloodWarnings\\_2019.pdf](https://nws.weather.gov/products/PDD/PDD_OplWirelessEmergencyAlertMessages_forFlashFloodWarnings_2019.pdf)

The characterization of the flash flood damage threat, source information and causative event, along with examples of FFWs in Impact-Based Warnings (IBW) format, are contained in the PDD:  
[https://nws.weather.gov/products/PDD/IBWforFlashFloods\\_2019.pdf](https://nws.weather.gov/products/PDD/IBWforFlashFloods_2019.pdf)

Based on feedback from the public survey referenced in the notice:  
[https://www.weather.gov/media/notification/pns19-31ffw\\_hea.pdf](https://www.weather.gov/media/notification/pns19-31ffw_hea.pdf)

and approvals for the broader IBW effort, NWS is proceeding to implement the WEA changes for FFWS.

WEA is a joint effort between the Federal Communications Commission, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, 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>

NWS has also solicited public feedback on a proposed expansion of weather warnings to the new 360-character maximum and the proposed content of the NWS messages carried by WEA in English and Spanish. Based on the positive feedback received, we have now finalized those messages. This Service Change Notice will be updated once an implementation date for 360-character FFW WEA messages in English and Spanish has been established.

For more information, please email:

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National Service Change Notices are online at:

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

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