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Service Change Notice 19-43: Updated
National Weather Service Headquarters Silver Spring MD
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To: Subscribers:
 -NOAA Weather Wire Service
 -Emergency Managers Weather Information Network
 -NOAAPORT
 Other NWS Partners and NWS Employees

From: Eli Jacks
 Chief, Forecast Services Division

Subject: Updated: Implementation of NWS 360 character English and Spanish
 Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA) messages on or around February
 6, 2020, and Technical Reminder for CAP users

Updated to change implementation date to on or around February 6, 2020
and to remind NWS Common Alerting Protocol (CAP) users about inclusion of
a second information block that supports Spanish language WEA.

Beginning in May 2019, Federal Communications Commission (FCC) rule
changes allow for the expansion of WEA from the existing maximum of 90
characters to a maximum of 360 characters. These rule changes also allow
for transmission of Spanish language WEA messages. NWS 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 and has finalized those messages.

WEA is a joint effort between the Federal Communications Commission, the
Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the wireless industry. WEA
allows emergency alerting authorities to geographically target emergency
messages to mobile devices, primarily cell phones. WEA message content is
contained in CAP formatted messages transmitted to FEMA's Integrated
Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS). IPAWS routes the WEA content to
wireless carriers who transmit it to cell phones in the warning area.

After some delay, FEMA implemented IPAWS support for 360-character and
Spanish language WEA. See the following public notice by the FCC
regarding FEMA implementation:
<https://ecfsapi.fcc.gov/file/121907276729/DA-19-1297A1.pdf>

Thus, NWS will implement 360-character and Spanish language WEA messages
on or around February 6, 2020.

Users of NWS CAP messages should note that Spanish language WEA messages
are enabled by the addition of a second information block in NWS CAP
messages when WEA activation is expected. Thus, NWS CAP users should
ensure systems have no issue handling a second information block. CAP
users should also note the addition of

information within NWS CAP messages supporting WEA. For technical details, see <https://www.weather.gov/documentation/tb-alerts-CAP-Supporting-360-Character-and-Spanish-WEA>

The warning areas alerted by WEA are designated as follows:
-Via a polygon, as defined using latitude and longitude coordinates
-Within a radius from a point
-On a county basis

The type of designation used is defined via the CAP message associated with specific hazards. More information about CAP and access to current CAP messages can be found here: <https://alerts.weather.gov>

The expansion of WEA messages up to 360 characters allows the NWS to provide wireless customers with more detailed and actionable information. The NWS will provide messages to WEA for hazards that are believed to be life-threatening and have consequences that can be mitigated or minimized by taking immediate action.

The language used in these expanded messages in both English and Spanish can be found via the following link: <https://www.weather.gov/wrn/wea360>

The NWS will continue to alert snow squall warnings via WEA using 90 character English messages until due diligence can be performed to determine the appropriate expanded content in English and Spanish of this relatively new NWS warning. Public notification will be provided if the NWS expands WEA messages for Snow Squall Warnings to include longer messages and/or Spanish messages.

Also, the length (360 characters or 90 characters) and language (English or Spanish) of the message received on a device once these changes go into effect is dependent on the wireless network and the language setting of the device. Prior to implementation, the NWS will continue to send 90 character English messages to alert the public of life-threatening hazards.

NWS Spanish messages slated for implementation do not contain accented Spanish characters because proper dissemination of those characters could not be confirmed. Given this constraint as well as established character limits, special consideration was made to ensure the NWS Spanish messages are understandable and consistent with the content of English messages. NWS will implement messages with properly accented characters when it is shown that those messages can be properly disseminated.

The composition of the NWS WEA messages for life-threatening hazards will be reviewed continuously and updated based on social science research, operational service assessments, and the continuous study of public feedback associated with all NWS products and services. Public notification is not anticipated every time a modification is made to an NWS WEA message(s). The content of WEA messages may be periodically revised to provide for the clearest communications to the public of life-

threatening weather hazards and recommended safety actions.

Additional information about this change can be found at:
https://nws.weather.gov/products/PDD/WEA_360_PDD_OPL.pdf

Further questions on the use of WEA by the NWS should be directed to:

Mike Gerber
301-427-9118
Mike.Gerber@noaa.gov

or

Kate Abshire
Telephone: 301-427-9535
Email: Kate.Abshire@noaa.gov

National Service Changes Notices are online at:
<https://www.weather.gov/notification>

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