



Ensuring a safe and secure homeland for all North Dakotans

Winter Storm Watch

The National Weather Service will issue a Winter Storm Watch when the potential of a significant weather occurrence is anticipated in the next day or two. The significant winter weather anticipated may be for blizzard, heavy snow, freezing rain, sleet, dangerous wind chills, or a combination of the above. Once a Winter Storm Watch is issued, one of three things will eventually happen as the event unfolds - (1) the Watch will be upgraded to a Winter Storm Warning, or, (2) the Watch will be upgraded to a Winter Weather Advisory, or, (3) the Watch will be canceled.

Winter Storm Warning

The National Weather Service will issue a Winter Storm Warning when life threatening winter weather is imminent, or occurring. Anytime you hear the National Weather Service has issued a Warning (winter or summer), you should automatically be thinking of life threatening dangerous weather. The criteria for a Winter Storm Warning is:

- Heavy Snow Warning - when 6 inches of new snow is expected in a 12 hour period - or -
- Heavy Snow Warning - when 8 inches of new snow is expected in a 24 hour period
- Ice Storm Warning - when dangerous amounts of ice accumulations are expected (usually 1/2 inch or more)
- Wind Chill Warning - when wind chills are forecast at 40 below zero or colder
- Blizzard Warning - (the most deadly) - when considerable falling and/or blowing snow is combined with sustained winds of 35 mph or greater, for an extended period of time (usually three hours or longer), reducing visibilities to less than 1/4 mile (near zero). Many times blizzard conditions also produce very dangerous wind chills.

Winter Weather Advisory

The National Weather Service will issue a Winter Weather Advisory when nuisance type winter weather is expected. In other words, less than the life threatening conditions of a Warning, but still a need for increased public awareness. During Advisory winter weather events, you can still function and commute, as long as you exercise more caution, allow more time for travel, etc.

The Criteria for a Winter Weather Advisory is:

- Snow Advisory - when new snowfall of 3 to 5 inches is expected.
- Blowing Snow Advisory - when blowing and drifting snow reduces visibilities down to around 1/2 mile - or blowing and drifting snow making travel difficult.
- Wind Chill Advisory - when wind chills are forecast at 20 below zero but not colder than 40 below zero.

For winter storm warnings and advisories, if only one specific weather element, i.e., heavy snow, is anticipated, the warning or advisory would be called a "Heavy Snow Warning" or "Snow Advisory." If a combination of weather elements are expected, i.e., heavy snow combined with wind producing dangerous wind chills, then a generic headline would be used, "Winter Storm Warning" or "Winter Weather Advisory" and the text in the product would provide more detail on how much snow, wind, and wind chill to expect and prepare for.