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Public Information Statement
National Weather Service Headquarters Washington DC
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To: Subscribers:
 -Family of Services
 -NOAA Weather Wire Service
 -Emergency Managers Weather Information Network
 -NOAAPort
 Other NWS Partners, Users and Employees

From: Eli Jacks
 Chief, Fire and Public Weather Services Branch

Subject: Soliciting Comments through March 31, 2013 on a Non-Operational Demonstration to Simplify NWS Watch, Warning and Advisory (WWA) Winter Weather Hazard Messages

NWS is accepting comments through March 31, 2013, on a non-operational demonstration of a proposed alternative approach for communicating expected winter weather hazards. Specifically, we are proposing an alternative to the current "Watch, Warning and Advisory" (WWA) Winter Weather Hazards headline system.

Motivation for this demonstration is driven by feedback from surveys, service assessments and user interactions indicating there may be confusion on the meaning and intent of NWS WWA headlines. As part of the "Weather-Ready Nation" initiative, NWS' goal is to ensure all hazard messages are as clear and understandable as possible.

This demonstration will have no impact on NWS official winter weather hazard products. All Valid Time Event Codes (VTEC) associated with NWS official products will be disseminated as usual. Alternative winter weather hazard message headlines, designed to clarify the intent of the official NWS hazard messages, are being created automatically and continually during this demonstration.

These alternative hazard headlines are being generated by special software created for purposes of this demonstration only. The software is "translating" the official WWA headlines to the proposed alternative headlines for 26 participating Weather Forecast Offices (WFOs) only. Then, a shortened version of official WWA messages are displayed side-by-side with the proposed alternative messages on a website created for purposes of this demonstration only:

http://nws.weather.gov/haz_simp/

This website also provides access to a map and listing of the 26 participating WFOs, details on the demonstration and the proposed language used in the alternative messages and information on how to access the messages and provide comments.

Users may also access the demonstration webpage throughout the course of the demonstration via a "web widget" in the lower left-hand corner of the NWS national webpage at:

<http://www.weather.gov/>

Daily message comparisons for specific WFOs will also generally be accessible via "Top News" links at the top of participating WFO homepages.

These non-operational, alternative headlines will be available from the links cited above only. Again, all official NWS winter weather hazards messages with VTEC will be issued as usual. Also, all individual winter weather product graphics associated with our official winter weather hazard products will also be accessible via the NWS national webpage.

The proposed alternative hazard headline language is using the plain English terms "Potential" and "Advise Caution" in place of the official "Watch" and "Advisory" terms, respectively. The "Warning" term is retained in the proposed alternative due its connection to the NWS mission of protecting life and property; however, in all alternative messages, individual hazard products, such as "Winter Storm Watch," "Winter Weather Advisory" and "Winter Storm Warning" are replaced with proposed plain English text within the alternative headlines.

The proposed alternative for this demonstration is just one possible approach to simplifying and clarifying our winter weather hazard message headlines. NWS is soliciting public and partner comments on whether a change away from the current WWA system should be considered at all, and if so, whether this approach or another approach should be considered.

Please send general comments on this demonstration via the survey on the link provided below:

<http://www.nws.noaa.gov/survey/nws-survey.php?code=WHSD>

Users may provide comments on specific message comparisons for specific dates, or ask questions about this demonstration via email at:

hazsimp@noaa.gov

A Product Description Document (PDD) is online at:

https://products.weather.gov/PDD/hazsimp_pdd.pdf

This demonstration will continue through March 31, 2013, and the comment period will remain open through this time. Once the 2012-13 winter season has concluded, the NWS will gather and analyze all comments and determine next steps.

For more information, please contact:

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National Public Information Statements are online at:

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

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