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Service Change Notice 15-06
National Weather Service Headquarters Washington DC
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From: Mark Tew
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Subject: Changes to the Tropical Weather Outlook Categories: Effective May 15, 2015

Effective May 15, 2015, the National Hurricane Center (NHC) and Central Pacific Hurricane Center (CPHC) will change the thresholds (low, medium, and high) for the three genesis categories in the Tropical Weather Outlook (TWO). This change will apply to both the text and graphical versions of the TWO.

Currently, NHC and CPHC describe the likelihood that a disturbance will develop into a tropical cyclone as either low (0-20 percent chance of formation), medium (30-50 percent chance), or high (60-100 percent chance).

Although NHC improved verifications using these bins when the product was first introduced, a drawback to this system has become apparent. The definitions do not correspond with some users' expectations of what the everyday terms low, medium, and high mean. For example, a 30 percent chance of occurrence falls in the lowest third of possible outcomes yet is described falls in the medium category. Similarly, 60 percent falls in the middle third of the possible outcomes yet falls in the high category.

This mismatch leads some users to overestimate the chance of formation when they hear that a system has entered the medium or high categories.

Improvements in forecast accuracy over the past few seasons now allow for a more natural assignment of the three bins. To better match users' expectations of the three categories to the traditional meanings of the category labels, effective May 15, 2015, the TWO genesis bins will change to:

Low: 0-30 percent
Medium: 40-60 percent
High: 70-100 percent

For questions regarding this notice, please contact:

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