

***NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE EASTERN REGION SUPPLEMENT 11-2004  
APPLICABLE TO NWSI 10-401  
JULY 9, 2004***

***Operations and Services  
Public Weather Warning Services, NWSPD 10-4  
WFO Products Specification, NWSI 10-401***

***EASTERN REGION FIRE WEATHER WATCH/RED FLAG WARNING PROGRAM***

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***SUMMARY OF REVISIONS:*** This Instruction supersedes Regional Operations Manual Letter (ROML) E-15-95, "Fire Weather Watch/Red Flag Warning Program," filed with WSOM Chapter D-06, dated October 12, 1995

<SIGNED>

JUNE 18, 2004

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Date

Table of Contents:

Page

1.	<b>Purpose</b> .....	3
2.	<b>Background</b> .....	3
3.	<b>Policy</b> .....	3
4.	<b>Notification of Change</b> .....	3

1. Purpose. The purpose of this Supplement is to define the Eastern Region (ER) policy for Weather Forecast Office (WFO) issuance of Fire Weather Watch and Red Flag Warnings.
2. Background. Over the years, the ER Fire Weather Watch/Red Flag Warning Program has been underutilized in parts of the Region, **despite** the exposure to significant fire threats. The use of these products has proven to be of great utility in advising fire suppression agencies of critical conditions that could cause extensive wildfire incidents. Consequently, this Supplement defines ER policy for the NWS Fire Weather Watch/Red Flag Warning Program.
3. Policy. All ER WFOs will issue **Fire Weather Watches** and **Red Flag Warnings** consistent with the guidelines outlined in Section 5 of NWSI 10-401 *Fire Weather Watch/Red Flag Warning (RFW)*.

Determination of the specific criteria for a Red Flag Event will be made at each WFO. All WFOs will review local criteria for issuing Fire Weather Watches and Red Flag Warnings with federal and state land management agencies on an annual basis.

Close coordination with the local user is essential to establish the parameters upon which to base Red Flag Warning criteria. However, local criteria should include some means of considering non-meteorological factors, such as fuel moisture. This may simply involve a phone call to a local fire manager to determine environmental conditions contributing to the fire danger level. Red Flag Warnings should **not** be based solely on weather conditions.

The term, "Fire Weather Watch," will be used to indicate the potential for dangerous fire weather conditions. Fire Weather Watches should be issued 12 to 48 hours in advance, but normally not issued more than 72 hours in advance, of the expected onset of critical weather conditions. In those few instances when conditions are conducive to the development of dry thunderstorms, it is permissible to issue a Fire Weather Watch in the 0-12 hour time frame.

In cases when the development of dangerous fire conditions is possible, but the forecaster's confidence is low, a Fire Weather Watch should not be issued. Rather, the forecaster should describe the expected conditions, along with any reasons for the forecast uncertainty, in the discussion portion of the Fire Weather Forecast (FWF). In addition, the event can be highlighted in a headline.

4. Notification of Change. ER WFOs should notify their customers/partners of changes in their fire weather program resulting from this Supplement. Additionally, all WFO Fire Weather Annual Operating Plans and Station Duty Manuals must be modified accordingly.