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WESTERN REGION WEATHER STORY POLICY

NOTICE: This publication is available at: <http://www.nws.noaa.gov/directives/>.

OPR: W/WR1x3 (M. Solum)

Certified by: W/WR1 (J. Zimmerman)

Type of Issuance: Routine

SUMMARY OF REVISIONS: This directive supersedes NWS Western Region Supplement 1-2012, dated December 19, 2012.

The following changes were made in this issuance:

1. Added mention of including confidence information in an Impacts-based Weather Story: Section 2.a.
 2. Removed mention of HWO and SPS: Section 3.a.i.1.
 3. Changed ODSO to WRH: Section 3.a.i.2.
 4. Changed maximum of graphics from three to five due to new GUI release: Section 3.a.i.3.
 5. Updated website for Weather Story information repository: Appendix A
 6. Updated Approving Official
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Signed 01/06/15
David Billingsley Date
Acting Director, Western Region

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1. Overview. Weather Story graphics are an important component of Goal 1 in the National Weather Service (NWS) Strategic Plan, “Improve weather decision services for events that threaten lives and livelihoods.” In conjunction with products and other Impact-based Decision Support Service (IDSS) tools¹, Weather Stories help provide relevant and important NWS information to many partners and the public before, during, and after a high impact event. Media, emergency managers and other core partners regularly use Impact-based Weather Stories to relay important and concise information to their clients and the public. Weather stories are popular with social media users and this popularity is expected to increase. Depending on the hazard, Weather Stories may be program-specific as needed, such as for marine, fire weather and hydrology.

2. Types of Weather Stories. There are two types of Weather Story graphics issued in Western Region (WR): a) Impact-based, and b) Informational.

a. Impact-based Weather Story. The high priority Impact-based Weather Story is issued when a weather, water or other event is expected to cause, or is causing, significant impacts in the area of responsibility for a Weather Forecast Office (WFO), River Forecast Center (RFC) or Center Weather Service Unit (CWSU). Impacted-based Weather Stories:

- focus on impacts information, including timing and confidence for upcoming or ongoing events affecting partners and the public, helping them make informed choices to stay out of harm’s way and employ appropriate preparedness and mitigation measures;

¹ Other IDSS tools include but are not limited to: web page headlines, red banner alerts, live/recorded web briefings and emails directly to core partners

- avoid a simple re-stating of non-impact information easily found in NWS text products (do not re-create the Watch/Warning/Advisory map);
- avoid overly technical representation of meteorology, such as hard-to-read or understand AWIPS or GFE graphics;
- focus on impacts and provide graphics different from those typically seen on television or media web sites;
- provide to-the-point decision support text, preferably in a brief, bullet format.

b. Informational Weather Story. The Informational Weather Story functions as a graphic Public Information Statement or education/outreach tool for local partners and the public. Informational Weather Stories:

- are lower priority than Impact-based Weather Stories but are not “routine”;
- may be used to support leading Impact-based Weather Stories with provision of meteorological background, comparison to other events, records, etc.;
- may cover topics including, but not limited to, climatology, safety awareness and safety awareness weeks;
- may be used for post event summaries.

3. Issuance Policy. Weather Stories are a “non-routine” service in Western Region and are event driven, so that users learn over time that when a weather story is posted, there is good reason to pay attention to the image and other relevant information. To remain credible, the NWS must be viewed as a professional, unbiased broker of weather information. Consequently, Weather Stories do not:

- employ overly elaborate holiday themes or any religious connotations;
- contain copyrighted photographic images without permission and source credit;

All Weather Stories are composed of one or more graphics. Accompanying text is required at the bottom of the image(s) to ensure compliance with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act. No ellipses or other special characters can be used in this text box so caution must be used when copying text from an image into this box. Weather Stories are displayed on local office web pages via a large icon on the upper right-hand side of office home pages. For information concerning prioritization of workload during a high impact event refer to WR Supplement 14-2003: Prioritizing Services, Information and Workload Activities for Western Region Offices.

Software or communication problems with Weather Stories should be addressed in the same manner all internet information problems are attended to in Western Region offices. Forecasters are not expected to issue Weather Stories during known software or communication outages.

a. Impact-based Weather Story. Before and during a high impact event, Impact-based Weather Stories are updated at least every 24 hours and must be kept consistent with other NWS services and information pertaining to that event(s). One or more Impact-based Weather Stories may be issued soon after an event to provide a summary or impacts. These event impact “wrap up” weather stories should not remain in the prominent top-right web page location for more than 24 hours. If an office wishes to keep them available for a longer time, a headline link in the “Top News” section should be utilized to maintain access.

i. WFO. All WFOs include Impact-based Weather Stories as part of their IDSS activities before and during high impact weather and water events in their County Warning Area.

1. Impact-based Weather Story issuance and other IDSS operations should begin when there is reasonable confidence that a high impact event may occur at some time during a seven-day forecast period.

2. Coordination and inter-office consistency of impact-based events are a normal part of the daily internal and external collaboration process within a WFO and with neighboring WFOs, CWSUs and RFCs. Responsibility for assuring consistent and accurate Impact-based Weather Stories rests with the Shift Supervisor, Meteorologist-in-Charge (MIC) and Western Region Headquarters (WRH). Weather Stories that contain graphics extending into another office's area of responsibility must be consistent with weather information from that neighboring office(s).

3. Up to five separate graphics can be posted on a WFO web page if needed to more clearly communicate a complex event, multiple events, and/or impacts. Use of multiple graphics include providing a timeline of the event and impacts, highlighting impacts on specific user sectors (such as transportation, agriculture, wildland fire and utilities) or prioritizing multiple impacts with the greatest threats first.

4. When more than one graphic is used, lead (first) images are seen and reacted to most by partners and the public because of their initial visibility (along with red banner headlines) at the top of an office web page. This should be considered when determining which Impact-based Weather Story image should be posted first.

Avoid placing too much information in a single graphic. This can make the Weather Story hard to understand and difficult to update.

ii. CWSU. The WR CWSU criteria for posting Impact-based Weather Stories is similar to that of WFOs with the CWSU's main concern focused within 12 to 24 hours. The CWSU should make sure the weather story is consistent with the affected WFO(s) forecasts and coordinate when appropriate. CWSUs may also post/link a WFO's Impact-based Weather Story for their Flight information Area (FIA) to highlight a significant event through seven days.

iii. RFC. WR RFCs may issue Impact-based Weather Stories similarly to WFOs with a focus on flooding of main stem rivers. In addition to flood impacts, RFCs can issue Impact-based Weather Stories to provide graphic updates of severe drought, abnormally low or excessive water supply, snowpack, etc. within their area of responsibility. Given the slowly evolving impacts of water supply forecasts, RFCs may issue Impact-based Weather Stories well in advance of actual impacts. RFC-issued Impact-based Weather Stories should be consistent with those issued by impacted WFOs within the area of responsibility and vice-versa.

b. Informational Weather Story. Informational Weather Stories should not remain in the top-right location of the office web page for more than 24 hours. After 24 hours, or if a high impact event dictates the replacement of an informational Weather Story and the office wishes to maintain public access to the informational story, a headline link should be used under the “Top News” portion of the web page.

APPENDIX A

Weather Story Resources

Colors, fonts and layout should follow the guidelines described in the Weather Story Google Site. Weather Story icon and image repositories are also available for use on this site.

The Weather Story Google Site provides detailed technical guidance regarding web display and content requirements as well as software used for all Weather Story issuances.

<https://sites.google.com/a/noaa.gov/nws-wr-dss-toolkit/weather-story>

All WR field offices are encouraged to develop local image and Weather Story template repositories for easy use. Offices are welcome to suggest additions to the regional repositories by submitting the item directly to WRH.

Refer to Western Region Supplement **PRIORITIZING SERVICES, INFORMATION AND WORKLOAD ACTIVITIES FOR WESTERN REGION OFFICES** for information on prioritizing Weather Stories and staffing for high impact events:
<http://www.nws.noaa.gov/directives/sym/pd01005003w142003curr.pdf>.

Glossary:

High Impact Event: A high impact event is any weather-dependent event that significantly impacts safety, health, the environment, economic productivity, or homeland security.