

Appendix A: Editing Long Duration W/W/A Headlines in GHG

Background

Prior to the implementation of Valid Time Event Code (VTEC) in long duration watch/warning/advisory (W/W/A) products, the NWS standardized the exact language and format for long duration headlines. This was required by national partners to better enable them to automatically process and disseminate NWS warnings-- an important part of the public/private partnership. Due to the many delays in implementing VTEC and the unknown reliability of the VTEC coding, the headlines produced by the Graphical Hazards Generator (GHG) software were “locked” so forecasters could not alter the format or wording and negatively impact the automatic dissemination process.

Because of the complicated nature of NWS long duration W/W/A products, GHG occasionally produces confusing or inaccurate headlines. Now that VTEC is enabled in these products and has proven its viability, automatic parsing routines should focus on VTEC rather than the headline wording, allowing forecasters to fix some of the confusing statements, inconsistencies and errors. This document will serve to provide guidance to forecasters on when editing of the headline is appropriate and when it is not.

The overall goal of unlocking long duration headlines is to provide our partners and stakeholders with clear, concise warning information in a consistent format.

Cautions

Regional MSDs will play an active role in determining whether WFOs in their region will have the option to turn off the GHG default and allow the optional headline editing mode. Unlocking the headline in GHG is not a free license to change headline language and format to personal preferences; the established headline policy set by region and OCWWS remains in effect. Forecasters or WFOs who repeatedly misuse headline editing will result in the WFO having to re-lock the headlines.

A vast majority of the headlines produced by GHG should NOT need editing. Further, many problems found in bad headlines have their roots in the creation of the hazard grids. Forecasters should make sure their hazard grids are accurate and reflect their intent before any headline is edited. All attempts should be made to fix headline issues via the grids first, before tackling the headline itself. This ensures the proper VTEC coding is being used throughout the life of the event, as an edited headline does not carry forward to future products.

Rules

The following sections detail the types of situations where headline editing is allowed or disallowed. Please refer questions to MSD if you encounter something not covered in this policy.

I. Upgrade situations

The following situations are considered “upgrades”:

- A watch is replaced by an advisory or warning
- An advisory is replaced by a warning
- Any other winter warning is replaced by a blizzard

In the last case, GHG produces two headlines, one of which states a hazard is cancelled. Forecasters should delete the “cancelled” headline at a minimum, and may then use “upgraded” wording as shown below:

...[HAZARD NAME] UPGRADED TO [HAZARD NAME]...IN EFFECT (FROM [beginning valid time]) THROUGH [ending valid time]...

Examples:

...SNOW ADVISORY UPGRADED TO WINTER STORM WARNING...IN EFFECT THROUGH 3 AM MST FRIDAY...

...WINTER STORM WARNING UPGRADED TO BLIZZARD WARNING...IN EFFECT FROM 2 PM THIS AFTERNOON THROUGH 2 AM PST TUESDAY...

II. Downgrades/Replacements

The word “Downgrade” should never be used. When a one hazard is changed to an equal or less-severe hazard (e.g blizzard to heavy snow warning), it is considered a replacement. Again, any headline signaling that something has been cancelled should be removed; and a “replaced by” headline should be used:

...[HAZARD NAME] REPLACED BY [HAZARD NAME]...IN EFFECT (FROM [beginning valid time]) THROUGH [ending valid time]...

Even when the change is to a lesser hazard, the word “downgrade” should not appear in a headline; use “replaced by” instead. As in the standard policy, the “FROM [beginning valid time]” is omitted when the hazard is already in effect or will begin within 3 hours.

Examples:

...HIGH WIND WARNING REPLACED BY WIND ADVISORY...IN EFFECT THROUGH 7 PM MST THIS EVENING...

...SLEET ADVISORY REPLACED BY WINTER WEATHER ADVISORY...IN EFFECT THROUGH 9 AM CST THIS MORNING...

III. Late Extensions and Incorrect Time Period Issued

Despite everyone's best efforts, occasionally a mistake is made in the hazard grids (such as an advisory issued for the wrong day), or a forecaster needs to extend a hazard just after the hazard has expired. The "late extension" error most often occurs with dense fog advisories, when a forecaster is waiting to see if the fog will dissipate near the expiration time and then is delayed in issuing an extension. When this occurs, GHG generates two headlines (one cancellation/expiration, one for the new hazard), which cannot be changed in a way that makes sense to those reading the product. A few examples:

a. Dense fog advisory extended just after the expiration time:

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/O.EXP.Kyyy.FG.Y.0020.000000T0000Z-071118T1700Z/  
/O.NEW.Kyyy.FG.Y.0021.071118T1706Z-071118T1800Z/
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...DENSE FOG ADVISORY IN EFFECT UNTIL 10 AM PST THIS MORNING...

...DENSE FOG ADVISORY HAS EXPIRED... (*delete this headline*)

NOTE: This cannot be done with convective watches. The WCN formatter will fail if this is attempted. A new watch would need to be issued by SPC.

b. Dense fog advisory mistakenly issued for wrong time period 24 hours in the future; the correction reads:

...DENSE FOG ADVISORY CANCELED... (*delete this headline*)

...DENSE FOG ADVISORY IN EFFECT FROM 11 PM TONIGHT UNTIL 9 AM CST WEDNESDAY...

When these situations occur, the forecaster should delete the cancellation or expiration headline.

IV. Placement of Elevation/Location in Headline

When long duration hazards are expected to affect only parts of the zone, such as above/below certain elevations, the location may be added to the headline immediately following the hazard instead of at the end of the headline. This is often more clear and makes more sense to the reader.

Examples:

...WINTER STORM WARNING ABOVE 4000 FEET UNTIL 5 PM MST THIS AFTERNOON...

...LAKE WIND ADVISORY FOR LAKE MEAD IN EFFECT FROM 10 AM THIS MORNING THROUGH 7 PM THIS EVENING...

V. Fire Weather Headlines

Where desired, Fire Weather Watch/Red Flag Warning headlines may be altered to include the reason for the watch/warning, or area affected, within the main portion of the headline instead of appended to the end.

Example:

...RED FLAG WARNING FOR STRONG WIND AND LOW HUMIDITY IN EFFECT FOR THE SAN BERNARDINO MOUNTAINS FROM 9 AM THIS MORNING THROUGH 8 PM PDT TONIGHT...

VI. Flood Watch Issues

In cases where flood warnings have been issued in an area covered by an areal flood watch and the WFO wishes to remove the now-unnecessary watch, GHG generates a cancellation message without any mention of the warning(s). This is confusing at best; forecasters are encouraged to remove the cancellation headline and replace with a statement that warnings are in effect. Also, in the event multiple areal and point flood watches are in effect and one is canceled, the resultant multiple headlines are confusing. Again, forecasters should remove the “canceled” headline when appropriate.

VII. Midnight/Noon Issues

In some cases, GHG will produce “12 AM” or “12 PM” in the headline of a product instead of “MIDNIGHT” or “NOON”. Forecasters should edit these instances to change from the actual hours to “MIDNIGHT” or “NOON” for clarity.

VIII. Marine – Reduce Number of Headlines

During major weather events affecting marine zones, the change in wind/sea conditions from moderate to strong to major conditions can generate multiple headlines. Forecasters are encouraged to delete the less severe headlines to produce warnings that highlight the most extreme weather in a clear and concise manner.

This is currently only sanctioned by Alaska and Western regions. Please check with your region’s MSD for regional policy.

IX. Timing Changes

In some cases, changing the valid time of a hazard can create confusing multiple headlines. For example, if a forecaster changes the valid times in a case where a wind advisory follows a high wind warning, and both are valid in the first three hours, the following headlines are created (VTEC included for reference):

/O.NEW.Kyyy.HW.W.0015.061121T1900Z-
061121T2100Z//O.EXT.Kyyy.WI.Y.0008.061121T2100Z-
061122T0200Z/

...HIGH WIND WARNING IN EFFECT UNTIL 1 PM PST THIS AFTERNOON...
...WIND ADVISORY NOW IN EFFECT UNTIL 6 PM PST THIS AFTERNOON...

Preferred headlines:

...HIGH WIND WARNING IN EFFECT UNTIL 1 PM PST THIS AFTERNOON... ...WIND
ADVISORY **IN EFFECT FROM 1 PM** UNTIL 6 PM PST THIS AFTERNOON...

Generally speaking, when the three hour “now in effect” rule causes confusing headlines, forecasters should edit them to make them clear to the reader.

X. Statements and Short Term Forecasts

Marine Weather Statements (MWS), Coastal/Lakeshore Flood Statements (CFW), Special Weather Statements (SPS) and Short Term Forecasts (NOW) that were created in GHG may be given multiple headlines by the software, depending on the use of local hazards; the forecaster may edit/delete them as necessary to create a clear and readable product. Also, in the case where a grammatical or spelling error is inadvertently issued to the public in certain statements, the warning software may include the error in subsequent products. The forecaster should edit the headline to correct errors when updating the product.

XI. Forbidden Edits

Some edits should never be made to headlines. Those include the following:

- Edits to change the hazard type, time period or area (via headline removal/addition) which cause a discrepancy with the grids and VTEC
- Wording changes for forecaster preference
- Adding the word “Downgrade”