

**NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE EASTERN REGION SUPPLEMENT 11-2004**  
**APPLICABLE TO NWSI 10-401**  
**September 1, 2006**

**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**

---

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

**OPR:** W/ER1x4 (H. Thurm)

**Certified by:** W/ER1 (J. Guiney)

**Type of Issuance:** Routine

---

**SUMMARY OF REVISIONS:** This supplement supersedes Eastern Region Supplement 11-2004, "Eastern Region Fire Weather Watch/Red Flag Warning Program," dated July 9, 2004.

This update makes two additions to the previous version:

- 1) The Eastern and Southern Geographic Area Coordination Centers input should also be solicited in any process that could facilitate the development of regionally consistent red flag criteria
- 2) Coordination with the customer before the issuance of a /RFW/ is critical to ensure that **\*both\*** the meteorological and non-meteorological (fuels) parameters will meet the necessary criteria.

<Signed by Mickey J. Brown>  
for

August 11, 2006

---

Dean P. Gulezian  
Director, NWS Eastern Region

Date

Table of Contents:

Page

1. **Purpose**.....3

2. **Background** .....3

3. **Policy**.....3

4. **Notification of Change**.....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. In recent years, the ER Fire Weather Watch/Red Flag Warning Program has been increasingly utilized by fire weather customers. 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. 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. Additionally, the Eastern and Southern Geographic Area Coordination Centers input should be solicited in any process that could facilitate the development of regionally consistent red flag criteria.

Close coordination with the local user is essential to establish the parameters upon which to base Red Flag Warning criteria. Local criteria will 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 will **not** be based solely on weather conditions.

Bottom line – coordination with the customer before the issuance of a *RFW* is critical to ensure that **both** the meteorological and non-meteorological (fuels) parameters will meet the necessary criteria.

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 rare 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.