

NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE 10-2203

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Operations & Services

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CRITICAL WEATHER DAYS

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

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SUMMARY OF REVISIONS: This directive supersedes NWSI 10-2203, “Critical Weather Day” dated December 17, 2008. Changes made reflect the NWS Headquarters reorganization effective April 1, 2015.

Additional changes include:

1. More clearly defined roles of the Senior Duty Meteorologist (SDM), National Weather Service Operations Center (NWSOC), and Regional Operations Centers (ROCs) in the Critical Weather Day (CWD) declaration process.
2. Simplified procedures for CWD declaration.
3. Improved Definitions.
4. Revised CWD initiation process.

/SIGNED

June 22, 2018

John D. Murphy
Chief Operating Officer

Date

Critical Weather Days

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1. Purpose

This instruction establishes policy and procedures to ensure all National Weather Service (NWS) resources are directed toward production and delivery of essential NWS products when there is an actual or threatened occurrence of a critical event, weather or non-weather related (such as a National Special Security Event) near or within the United States, its inhabited territories, possessions, or their coastlines; or, when there is a significant event requiring an increased awareness or availability of meteorological information. The declaration of a Critical Weather Day (CWD) will make certain all possible steps are taken to ensure the timely production and distribution of NWS products and guidance necessary to protect life and property.

2. Definitions

- a. **Critical Weather Day event.** A CWD is triggered by significant weather or events within the United States, on/near the coast of the United States and its inhabited territories or possessions (including Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands, and Guam).

Examples include:

- A widespread or intense severe weather outbreak;
- A storm system causing heavy precipitation and/or significant flooding;
- A highly impactful snow, freezing rain, or blizzard event;
- A tropical cyclone threatening the United States and its inhabited territories or possessions (including Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, and Guam) or producing excessive rainfall after moving inland;
- A highly impactful space weather event;
- A high-profile event with a large number of attendees and participants;
- Other NWS impact-based decision support service events, e.g., wildfire, large-scale disaster, tsunamis, volcanoes, a major event requiring substantial impact-based decision support services, a National Special Security Event (NSSE), Special Event Assessment Rating (SEAR), or an event expected to garner significant media attention and/or overwhelm first responders.

- b. **National Special Security Event (NSSE) and/or Special Event Assessment Rating (SEAR).** A NSSE is any event which the Department of Homeland Security believes could be an attractive target for terrorists, while a SEAR is defined as a function that draws a large public crowd to the host city or venue. A number of factors are taken into consideration when designating an event as a National Special Security Event or Special Event Assessment, including a few outlined below:

- **Anticipated attendance by dignitaries** - Events attended by officials of the United States Government and/or foreign dignitaries where an independent federal interest may be tasked with ensuring the event transpires without incident, and that sufficient resources are available if an incident occurs.
- **Size of the event** - A large number of attendees and participants generally increases the security requirements. In addition, larger events are more likely to draw the attention of terrorists or other criminals, particularly those interested in employing weapons of mass destruction.
- **Significance of the event** - Some events have historical, political and/or symbolic significance that may heighten concern about possible terrorist acts or other criminal activity.
- **NSSE/SEAR events and information** – More details, including definitions and a list of events is found on the NWSOC webpage:
<https://sites.google.com/a/noaa.gov/nws-opscenter/nwsoc/sewg?pli=1>

3. Systems, Services, and Activities Affected

The following NWS activities may be affected or postponed during a CWD declaration:

- a. Operational implementations;
- b. System tests and changes involving the computers, workstations, servers, networking and/or communications systems, components or facilities if they have a potential for adversely affecting operations; and
- c. National Centers for Environmental Prediction (NCEP), NCEP Central Operations (NCO), and Advanced Weather Interactive Processing System (AWIPS) tests and changes to systems or supporting facilities.

4. Procedures

- a. The Senior Duty Meteorologist (SDM) will coordinate CWD requests, as described below:
 - The NWS Assistant Administrator (NWS AA), Deputy Assistant Administrator (DAA), Chief Operating Officer (COO), Regional Directors, NCEP Director, Directors of National Centers, National Water Center (NWC) Director, National Weather Service Operations Center (NWSOC), Regional Operations Centers (ROCs), NCEP Lead Forecasters and/or their designee(s) will request the declaration of a CWD.
 - The request and supporting information will be provided by phone to the SDM.
 - The requestor will provide: a) specific reason for the request; b) period of

- the request; c) areas/Regions/Centers/systems affected.
 - The SDM will coordinate the proposed CWD declaration with impacted Regions/Centers and notify NWSOC in advance of a pending CWD via phone, NWSChat, or email.
 - The SDM will make the final CWD declaration.
 - For *national* level systems, services, and activities, exceptions to impacted systems, services, and activities will be considered by the NWS COO, NCEP/NCO Director or their designee.
 - For *regional* or *local* level systems, services and activities, exceptions to impacted systems, services, and activities will be considered by the NCEP Center Director(s), Regional Director(s), and/or designee (e.g. Regional Operations Center). They will determine any temporal/areal postponement and/or exemption of regional or local level systems, services, and activities potentially affected by a declared CWD, based on operational needs and services.
 - The SDM will provide CWD notifications and status updates as identified below.
- b. CWD notification and status updates will be provided by the SDM to the email list identified below (Section 5). The SDM will also send an email to ncep.sdm.cwd@noaa.gov, place a notification on NCEP's CWD website (<http://www.nco.ncep.noaa.gov/pmb/cwd/>), and send an administrative message (NOUS42 KWBC). If the CWD is modified, extended, or canceled prior to the scheduled end, the same group is notified by email and admin message, and the website is updated.
- At a minimum, CWD status messages will include start time, end time, duration of event; and, when possible, the reason for the CWD.
 - CWD status messages will be posted whenever the event is updated, extended, or terminated.

5. Required CWD Notification List

- a. NWS AA & DAA
- b. NWS Regional and Deputy Directors
- c. NOAA Operations Center (NOC)
- d. Chief, Radar Operations Center
- e. NCEP NCO IT Help Desk (admin hours only)
- f. NWS Homeland Security Activity Director
- g. NWS Chief Information Officer
- h. NWS COO
- i. NCEP Directors or designates
- j. NCEP National Centers
- k. National Water Center Director
- l. National Water Center Operations Division

- m. NCO Silver Spring Telecommunications Gateway operator
- n. NWS AWIPS Network Control Facility supervisor
- o. Other NOAA/NWS Managers & Directors as deemed appropriate
- p. National Weather Service Operations Center (NWSOC)
- q. National Weather Service Regional Operations Centers (ROCs)