



*Ensuring a safe and secure homeland for all North Dakotans*

### Winter Season Watch

The National Weather Service issues Watches when the risk of a hazardous winter weather event has increased, but the occurrence, location, and/or timing is still uncertain. Watches are issued to highlight significant and life threatening situations that may occur or are possible in the next several days. The significant winter weather could be heavy snow, freezing rain, sleet, blowing snow, extreme cold, blizzard, or combinations of these. Watches are issued for winter storms, blizzards, and wind chill, depending on what the threat is. Watches may be cancelled or upgraded to advisories or warnings.

### Winter Season - Warning

The National Weather Service issues Warnings when life threatening winter weather is imminent, or occurring. Anytime you hear the National Weather Service has issued a Warning (winter or summer), you should be thinking of Life threatening dangerous weather. There are four types of warnings issued for winter weather: Winter Storm Warning; Blizzard Warning; Ice Storm Warning; and Wind Chill Warning.

- **Winter Storm Warning** - 6 inches (or more) of snow is expected in a 12 hour (or less) period of time, OR, when 8 inches (or more) of snow is expected in a 24 hour (or less) period of time. Winter Storm Warnings may also be issued for combinations of snow, wind, blowing snow and dangerously cold conditions.
- **Blizzard Warning** – (the most deadly winter events in North Dakota) - considerable falling and/or blowing snow combined with winds of 35 mph Or more and reducing visibility to less than ¼ mile (near zero), and lasting At least 3 hours.
- **Ice Storm Warning** - when dangerous accumulations of ice are expected. Generally ¼ inch thick or more.
- **Wind Chill Warning** – wind chills of 40 below zero or colder, over a large geographical area, and for at least several hours.

### Winter Season -Advisory

The National Weather Service issues Advisories when nuisance type winter weather is expected. These conditions pose an inconvenience, but if caution is exercised, the condition should not be life threatening. In other words, winter

weather conditions less significant than those associated with warnings. During advisory winter weather events use extra caution, and for example, when traveling, allow extra time, extra stopping distance, and slow down.

There are three types of advisories issued specifically for winter weather: the Winter Weather Advisory, the Freezing Rain Advisory, and the Wind Chill Advisory.

The Criteria for a Winter Weather Advisory is:

- **Winter Weather Advisory-** issued when 3 to 5 inches of snow is Expected in a 12 hour period, in the next day or so. Winter weather advisories are also issued for a combination of events like lesser amounts of snow but with reduced visibility in blowing snow due to wind. They can also be issued on windy days with little or no snow falling, but with blowing snow reducing visibility to ½ mile.
- **Freezing Rain Advisory** – issued for accumulations of freezing rain or freezing drizzle making roads and sidewalks slippery. Ice accumulations less than ¼ inch thick.
- **Wind Chill Advisory-** issued for wind chill of 25 below zero to 40 below zero, over a large geographical area, and for that at least Several hours.

Note that with all winter products issued by the National Weather Service, impact on people (transportation, commerce) is always considered. As a result, watches, advisories, and warnings may be issued for something less than the criteria stated above when impact will be greater. For example, a few inches of snow around the morning or afternoon commute to/from school and work could trigger an advisory. This way, the National Weather Service heightens your awareness to the situation.