

Winter Weather Terminology

The National Weather Service (NWS) issues winter storm warnings, watches and advisories. Here is what those terms mean and what you should do.

Winter Weather Advisory including Lake Effect - There is a high confidence that a hazardous winter event will occur over a 12-hour period but should not become life threatening if caution is used. Winter event with more than one hazard or only snow (3-5" in 12 hrs, or 5-7" in 24 hrs), or a combination of wind-driven snow, sleet and/or freezing rain, or sleet accumulating < 1/2 inch. Or only freezing rain accumulating < 1/2". A *lake effect snow* is different than regular system snow in that it is often very localized producing dramatic changes in visibility and road conditions over short distances. The NWS will include *lake effect snow* advisory information when appropriate.

Winter Storm Watch including Lake Effect - Winter storm conditions including freezing rain, sleet, and heavy snow are possible within the next 36-48 hours. Continue monitoring the weather forecast. A *lake effect snow* is different than regular system snow in that it is often very localized producing dramatic changes in visibility and road conditions over short distances. The NWS will include *lake effect snow* watch information when appropriate.

Winter Storm including Lake Effect - A significant winter storm is occurring or will begin in the next 24-36 hours. Heavy snow (e.g., 6 inches in 12 hours; 8 inches or more in 24 hours) or the combination of snow, sleet, freezing rain, and moderate winds will impact travel and outdoor activities and could become dangerous or deadly. A *lake effect snow* is different than regular system snow in that it is often very localized producing dramatic changes in visibility and road conditions over short distances. The NWS will include *lake effect snow* warning information when appropriate.

Ice Storm Warning - An Ice Storm Warning is issued when mostly freezing rain is expected with ice accumulations of at least ¼ inch within a 12-hour period. When a Warning is issued, take necessary precautions – consider canceling travel plans.

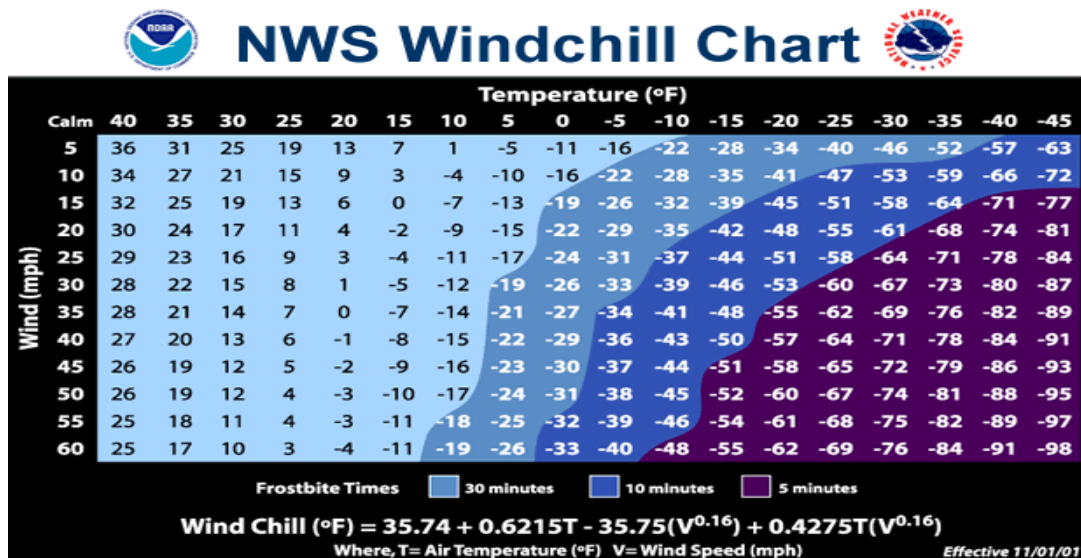
Blizzard Warning - A dangerous storm with winds that are 35 mph or greater in combination with falling and/or blowing snow that reduces visibility to 1/4 mile or less for a duration of at least 3 hours. Canceling travel plans is advised.

Snow Squall Warning - A short duration warning issued for a relatively small geographic area when intense short-lived bursts of heavy snowfall occur. Although rare, these snow squalls can lead to quick reductions in visibilities and often accompanied by gusty winds. Sudden whiteout conditions and slick roads can develop.

Wind Chill Advisory - Issued for bitter cold wind chills of 25° to 40° below zero. This criteria is specific for Ashland, Bayfield, Burnett, Douglas, Iron, Price, Sawyer and Washburn Counties in Wisconsin. (20° to 34° below zero for the rest of the state)

Wind Chill Warning - Issued with wind chills of 40°F below zero for NW Wisconsin counties. (35°F below zero for the rest of the state of Wisconsin). Frostbite is possible when outside for 10 minutes or less.

Wind Chill Calculator - <http://www.nws.noaa.gov/om/winter/windchill.shtml>



Keep Warm and Safe

Frostbite is damage to body tissue caused by extreme cold. Frostbite causes a loss of feeling and a white or pale appearance in extremities such as fingers, toes, ear tips or the tip of the nose. If symptoms are detected, seek medical care immediately!

Hypothermia is a condition that develops when the body temperature drops below 95°F. It is very deadly. Warning signs include uncontrollable shivering, disorientation, slurred speech and drowsiness. Seek medical care immediately!

Overexertion is dangerous. Cold weather puts an added strain on the heart. Unaccustomed exercise such as shoveling snow or pushing a car can bring on a heart attack or make an existing medical condition worse.

Pets also need extra care when the temperatures fall. They should be brought inside when the temperature reaches 30°F with wind chill. Dogs and cats can get frost-bitten ears, nose and feet if left outside during bitter cold weather. Chemicals used to melt snow and ice can also irritate pets' paws – be sure to keep anti-freeze, salt and other poisons away from pets.

Be Prepared at Home

Some of the dangers associated with winter storms include loss of heat, power and telephone service and a shortage of supplies. To help protect your family, now is the time to put together a disaster supply kit. Here are some items to include:

- Flashlights and extra batteries
- Battery-powered NOAA Weather Radio and a commercial radio
- Bottled water and non-perishable food that requires no cooking
- First-aid supplies
- Fire extinguisher, smoke detector and carbon monoxide detector
- If appropriate, extra medications and baby items
- If you have an emergency heating source such as a fireplace or space heater, make sure you have proper ventilation
- Make sure pets have shelter and plenty of food and water

For additional information, contact your county or tribal emergency management office, the National Weather Service or ReadyWisconsin.wi.gov.