

2024 Winter Changes with the National Weather Service by KI5LNM

Winter Weather Advisory Criteria is for ice accumulation of glaze up to 1/8 inch, snowfall is trace to under 2 inches, and sleet is trace to 1/2 inch. Travel impact is minimal as mostly only overpasses will be affected with icy spots. In the case of winter weather advisory, the major impact will be if overpasses are closed in populated areas and at rush hour in particular as the many vehicles on the roads will need to find ways around the overpasses to get where they need to go.

Winter Storm Warning Criteria is for ice accumulation of greater than 1/8 inch, snowfall of equal to or greater than 2 inches, and sleet equal to or greater than 1/2 inch. Travel is impacted significantly now as major roads will be affected. There can be snow, freezing rain, sleet and some power outages. This event can begin as an Advisory but as there could be greater accumulation or accidents or the impact of the event that was upgraded to Warning.

Ice Storm Warning Accumulation of freezing rain that is equal to or greater than 1/4 inch with widespread power outages. One thing to be aware of is that Live Oak trees will have ice damage occur to them faster than other trees as they will still have their leaves. As ice accumulates on the leaves this increases significantly the weight of the branch and more likely to break. This increases the damage to power lines.

Watch vs. Warning

Winter Storm Watch is when one is to prepare. This is when it seems possible for dangerous winter weather within 48 hours. Confidence is medium.

Winter Storm Warning is when one is to take action. This is when there will be dangerous winter weather in the next 12 to 36 hours or has already started to occur. Considerable travel problems are to be expected. Best to stay home.

Winter Weather Advisory is when one is to be aware. This is when there could be potentially dangerous winter weather within the next 12 to 36 hours or is occurring. Travel may be difficult.

Extreme Cold and Wind Chill Consolidation

Wind Chill Watch and Warnings are being done away with and combined in the Extreme Cold Watch and Warnings. As they say cold is cold whether the wind is blowing or not. So there is now no distinction of how the wind influences the temperature it is all combined into one number now. This can be air temperature or wind chill value.

Extreme Cold Warning Lee County is in the area where the criteria is if the temperature drops down to 10F over a larger area.

Cold Weather Advisory Lee County is in the area where the criteria is if the temperature drops down to 20F over a larger area.

Freeze Warning Hard freeze and freeze are now combined. As freeze warnings are designed for agriculture users mainly. In our area there are few that this is necessary for every time that it freezes. Now there will be a freeze warning issued for the first freeze of the season which is the first widespread killing freeze. This lets everyone know winter is really here. After that, there will be no new freeze warnings issued.

Hard Freeze as a term is going away but the phrase will still pop up in discussions. This is when temperatures are at or below 28F. This is the point where often pipes freeze and plants and trees damage are common. Usually the temperature needs to dip down and stay down for a time. So although not an official phrase in warnings or advisories, you may still here it when talking about what is happening or about to happen.

Winter outlook for this year

Likely temperatures will be above normal. This is common in La Niña years and we are in one now. This does not mean that we will not have some winter weather. We could still have an arctic front come through. Winters in which we have had ice storms, overall have been warmer than average.

Sadly on the precipitation front, we will also see lower than normal rainfall. Also an affect of La Niña. We are in the drought persists area of the map.

Our dry fall weather gives us an above normal fire potential as well through the winter months.

YouTube: [NWSSanAntonio, 2024 Winter Weather Product Changes and Criteria](#), posted 7 November 2024