

Severe / Hazardous Weather Terms



WARNING: Issued by the National Weather Service (NWS) local offices indicating that a particular weather hazard is either imminent or occurring. A warning indicates the need to take action to protect life and property. Typical warnings include:

- Tornado Warning
- Severe Thunderstorm Warning
- Flash Flood/Flood Warning
- Excessive Heat Warning

WATCH: Issued by the NWS, indicating that conditions are favorable for the development of a particular severe weather event. A watch is normally issued for several hours and indicates a need for planning, preparation and an increased awareness of changing weather conditions. Typical watches include:

- Tornado Watch
- Severe Thunderstorm Watch
- Flood Watch

COLD AIR FUNNELS: Weak funnel cloud extensions from cumulus clouds that typically remain aloft. Cold air funnels form in cold, unstable air masses and are not usually associated with thunderstorms or severe weather.

DOWNBURST: Intense gust of wind or down draft that exits the base of a thunderstorm and spreads out horizontally at the earth's surface as a strong wind which often causes damage.



FLASH FLOOD: A flood that can occur very rapidly. Flash floods occur as the result of very heavy rainfall in a short period of time, generally over a relatively small area.

FLOOD: The condition that occurs when water overflows the natural or artificial confines of a stream or body of water, or accumulates by drainage over low lying areas.

FUNNEL CLOUD: Violently rotating column of air that is not in contact with the ground. A tornado passes through the funnel cloud stage during its development and dissipation.

GUST FRONT: The leading edge of a mass of cool, gusty air that flows from the base of a thunderstorm and spreads along the ground in advance of the thunderstorm.

LIGHTENING: Generally, any and all of the various forms of electrical discharge produced by the thunderstorms.

SEVERE THUNDERSTORM: A thunderstorm producing a tornado, damaging winds of 58 mph or higher, and / or hail $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch in diameter or larger.

SQUALL LINE: Any line or narrow band of thunderstorms. Squall lines can extend across multiple states.

THUNDERSTORM: A local storm produced by a cumulonimbus cloud and accompanied by lightning and thunder, usually with strong wind gusts, heavy rain and sometimes hail.

TORNADO: A violently rotating column of air that comes in contact with the ground, often descending from the base of a severe thunderstorm. Tornadoes are usually funnel-shaped with the narrow end nearest the ground.

