

WINTER WEATHER NETS --- NW OHIO SKYWARN™

To provide the NWS's Cleveland Weather office a more complete picture of what's happening during winter weather events, the **NW Ohio SKYWARN™** net will be activated on a limited basis on the 147.375 repeater. Snow does not show up well on radar, even the new Doppler-Nexrad systems. We will be reporting snow or ice depths and rain-ice lines.

When Cleveland NWS issues a heavy snow warning, freezing rain/drizzle warning, heavy sleet warning, winter storm warning or blizzard warning, the **NW Ohio SKYWARN™** net will be activated. We **MIGHT** also be activated for various advisory statements. The net **WILL NOT** be activated for winter storm or blizzard **WATCHES**. These various warnings and advisories are explained below.

The net will be activated on the 147.375 repeater when an actual warning (or possibly an advisory) is in effect and snow or ice starts to fall in NW Ohio. The net will be activated on the top of each hour until 10 minutes after each hour to gather reports of snow or ice depth. The length of each session will be determined by the Net Control Station, but each session will be at least 10 minutes long. The NCS will also determine how long to keep these sessions running.

A "few" explanations may be in order because most people are not familiar with winter weather terms.

SNOW - in an NWS forecast, without a qualifying word such as occasional or intermittent means that the fall of snow is of a steady nature probably will continue for several hours without letup.

HEAVY SNOW - in this part of Ohio, this means greater than or equal to 6" of accumulation in 24 hrs.

SLEET -frozen rain drops that bounce when hitting the ground or other objects and less than 1/2" accumulation. Sleet does not coat trees or wires.

HEAVY SLEET - same as above; but greater than or equal to 1/2" accumulation.

FREEZING RAIN - rain that occurs when the surface temperature is below freezing and the moisture that falls as a liquid, freezes upon impact resulting in a coating of ice glaze on all exposed objects.

BLOWING & DRIFTING SNOW - generally occurs together and results from strong winds and falling snow, or loose snow on the ground.

BLIZZARD - this means that considerable falling and/or blowing snow (visibility less than 1/4 mile) and sustained winds of at least 35 mph are expected for several hours. Temperatures are usually below 20 degrees F.

WIND CHILL INDEX - the way that air of a given temperature, when added with a given wind velocity, feels on exposed skin.

Winter weather events will fall into 1 of 3 different general categories: **WATCHES, ADVISORIES AND WARNINGS. WINTER STORM WATCHES** may be either changed to **ADVISORIES** or **WARNINGS**, as the storm gets closer and the forecast becomes clearer. Advisories may also be upgraded to warnings.

WINTER STORM WATCH - issued within 36 hours of the event. This is meant to alert people to the possible occurrence of **BLIZZARD** conditions, **HEAVY SNOW** conditions, **FREEZING RAIN** conditions with accumulations of >0.5" of ice or **HEAVY SLEET** conditions. This should be considered as a kind of heads-up statement, and you should be listening for later advisories or warnings.

ADVISORIES - issued within 12 hrs before the event. These may describe specific events, or a more general statement may be used. The different advisories are:

- 1) **SNOW** - 2 to 5 inches are expected.
- 2) **BLOWING & DRIFTING SNOW** - Visibility intermittently 1/4 mi. or less.
- 3) **WIND CHILL** - -25 to -34 degrees expected.
- 4) **FREEZING RAIN** - Hazardous driving conditions and/or up to 1/2" of ice.
- 5) **WEATHER ADVISORIES** - If any 2 or more of the above conditions might apply, then this more general statement will be used. An explanation of what to expect will be included with this statement.

WARNINGS - Issued within 12 hrs before the event. These may describe specific events, or a more general statement may be used. The different warnings are:

- 1) **HEAVY SNOW** - Greater than or equal to 6" in 24 hrs is expected.
- 2) **WIND CHILL** - Below -35 expected.
- 3) **FREEZING RAIN** - Can cause hazardous driving conditions and/or greater than 1/2" of ice.
- 4) **WINTER STORM WARNINGS** - If any 2 or more of the above conditions might apply, then this more general statement will be used. An explanation of what to expect will be included with this statement.

BLIZZARD WARNING - Expect blizzard conditions in the warning Area. If needed, this warning will be separate from the above warnings.

Listed in the table below is a summary of what amounts of various things will usually be associated with a given statement.

Event	Advisory	Watch	Warning
Snow	2 -5"	>=6"	>=6" in 24 Hours
Freezing Rain	<1/2"	>=1/2"	>=1/2"
Sleet	<1/2"	>=1/2"	>=1/2"
Wind Chill	N/A	-25F to -34F	Below -35F
Blowing & Drifting Snow	N/A	Visibility <1/4mile	N/A

Here is what we will be asking for when the nets are activated.

- 1) **SNOW DEPTH REPORTS** - This measurement is actually an average of three Measurements. NWS requests that you use a normal ruler and take the measurements of the snow in areas that seem to represent the average depth. Add all three of these measurements together and divide that # by three.

Example: Depth reading #1 4.75"

Depth reading #2 4.25"

Depth reading #3 6.00"

TOTAL 15.00"

Divide the TOTAL by 3 5.00" This is what you report.

Please do not take the depth measurement from that big drift on the side of your house or driveway! This is not a true measurement. By the same thoughts, areas that have been blown almost clear of snow are not representative of what's really happening either.

- 2) **ICE REPORTS** - We will begin taking reports of freezing rain as soon as you realize that it is falling. Locating the rain - freezing rain line is very important, so even if it's still "just raining" in your area, we might be asking you to confirm that. Remember, freezing rain is in liquid form until it hits the ground, where it freezes on contact. Radar can't see this happening - only spotters can.

We will **NOT** be running these nets all night long. We intend to perhaps run them up until midnight, and then start up again at 5 am. This, of course, will all depend on the timing of the storm.

The NWS usually issues snowfall maps at 7am and 7pm (0 and 1200z) each day, and so in the case of an overnight event, they would like to get the info by 6:30am. Other reason that they are asking for this snowfall info is to know whether to upgrade an advisory a warning of some type. NWS also tracks the rain-ice line during an ice storm to help travelers know where to stay away from.

In trying to set up guidelines for the winter weather nets, we had to keep in mind the long term events that these weather conditions tend to be. This is the reasoning behind the 10 minute nets at each hour. We also could not reasonably expect people to go out in the middle of a cold, snowy night and measure the snow depth. That's why the nets will usually be suspended from midnight to 4am (reopening at 5am, if needed).

There is one other thing to keep in mind. When there is a winter weather event taking place, ARES may also be activated to assist the hospitals, or for other emergency communications as needed. These nets will usually be run on repeaters **OTHER THAN** 147.375.

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