

Watch, Warning, Advisory: What the Weather Service Is Telling You

Name: _____

Date: _____

Class: _____

Read the lesson at myweatherrock.com/journal/explainers/watch-warning-advisory (or the printed copy), then answer below.

Remember

A **watch** means conditions are favorable for a hazard: the ingredients are gathering, so get ready. A **warning** means the hazard is happening, about to happen, or highly likely: act now. An **advisory** means conditions are less serious than warning criteria but still hazardous enough to cause trouble if you ignore them. One question separates the first two: are the ingredients gathering, or is it here?

Questions

1. A Severe Thunderstorm Watch is issued for your county. What has happened?

- ☐ A. A severe storm is hitting your town now
- ☐ B. Conditions are favorable for severe storms over a broad area
- ☐ C. A storm passed and the risk is over

2. Which headline means you should act immediately?

- ☐ A. Watch
- ☐ B. Warning
- ☐ C. Advisory

3. What does an advisory tell you?

- ☐ A. The hazard is worse than a warning
- ☐ B. A hazard below warning criteria that can still cause trouble
- ☐ C. The forecast has been cancelled

4. Which pair is generally wider in area and earlier in time?

- ☐ A. Warnings
- ☐ B. Watches
- ☐ C. They are always the same size

5. The Weather Service has announced a change to these headlines. What is it?

- ☐ A. Warnings will be retired
- ☐ B. The advisory headline will be replaced by plain language naming the hazard
- ☐ C. Watches will be renamed alerts

In your own words

Your area is put under a severe thunderstorm watch at nine in the morning, and a warning at four in the afternoon. Describe what you would do at each of those moments, and explain why the two answers are different.

Answer key (for the teacher)

1. A Severe Thunderstorm Watch is issued for your county. What has happened?

B. Conditions are favorable for severe storms over a broad area — A watch means the ingredients are gathering across an area over a window of hours. Nothing has happened yet, which is exactly why it is the good time to prepare.

2. Which headline means you should act immediately?

B. Warning — A warning means the hazard is occurring, imminent, or highly likely where you are. Warnings are smaller and shorter than watches because by then the Weather Service knows where.

3. What does an advisory tell you?

B. A hazard below warning criteria that can still cause trouble — An advisory covers conditions less serious than warning criteria but still hazardous enough to cause problems if you ignore them, like freezing drizzle or dense fog.

4. Which pair is generally wider in area and earlier in time?

B. Watches — Watches are broad and early because the forecaster knows the ingredients but not the exact spot. Warnings narrow down once the event is real.

5. The Weather Service has announced a change to these headlines. What is it?

B. The advisory headline will be replaced by plain language naming the hazard — The advisory headline and special weather statement are set to be replaced with plain language headlines that name the hazard first. Watch and warning stay unchanged. The change has been announced, not completed.