

2022 San Antonio/Alamo Area Winter IWT Workshop

Summary of Discussion and Best Practices

Impact Messaging

- A unified impact message is critical among all IWT partners - consider adding a section in the AFD for Key Messages similar to what is in NWS Situation Report
- Messaging these core impacts
 - Will there be snow/ice on grassy surfaces?
 - Will there be snow/ice on elevated roadways?
 - Will there be snow/ice on surface roads?
 - Is there a risk for power outages (either from downed power lines or rolling outages at ERCOT request)? (tougher to do?)
- Message broad terms and impacts in the Outlook phases, versus specific amounts
- Messaging of trends of both forecast impacts and forecast confidence is important
- Messaging timing and duration is very important
 - When will accumulation start, when will it end, when will it melt
 - Timing graphics needed - some expressed this format is easier to understand
- Messaging preparation is very important, especially to rural and vulnerable populations. NWS graphics IWT can use can be found in the Links and Resources below.
- Clear and concise messaging is needed - no technical jargon, consistent use of confidence wording, no abbreviations, and multiple languages
- A common set of words to estimate probability should be looked into further by the IWT. See links below.

Update Cadence from NWS

- Outlook Phase - If doing once per day then by 4AM is preferred. If twice per day then by 4AM and 2-3PM
- Watch and Warning Phases - Twice per day by 4AM and 2-3PM

Watches/Warnings

- Watches don't matter as much to some partners - decisions are being made off messaged impacts regardless, even before the watch phase
- However watches can serve a purpose for others
- Clear messaging needed between the difference of a watch and a warning
- Longer Watch lead time is better (48-72 hrs), especially if it is a Friday and an event may be happening Monday
- Same day Warnings are too late - lead time closer to 24 hours if possible
- Media has indicated the public likes and understands being shown forecast impacts, accumulations, and model radar versus watches and warnings
- Past the preparation time range, consider messaging what can we do to stay safe now?

Vulnerable populations

- Eliminate jargon and simplify graphics - literacy and comprehension can be a challenge
- Messaging in multiple languages
- Partnerships needed with non-governmental organizations to help message. These are groups that are already in touch with those populations.
- Messaging to check on your neighbors

Probabilistic snowfall/ice

- Useful for internal situational awareness and planning - decision makers are tending to be more cautious after the 2021 Winter storm
- Showing worst case models to the public can hurt - especially with no context
- Agreed to keep internal to decision makers and not shared with the public

Winter Storm Severity Index (WSSI)

- Can be useful for showing differing severity of impacts across the region
 - Several IWT members expressed liking this product, including school districts and the media
- Caution...impacts on the low end of the scale may be underdone for this region
- KML/GIS layers are available on the WSSI page in the Links and Resources below

Information Sharing

- NWSChat - extremely useful for sharing information. NWSChat 2.0 coming in 2023 will allow pictures and graphics to be shared
- Public works, police, and a lot of assets are out looking for ice. Presents an opportunity to share this info more widely by messaging in NWSChat

Social Media

- Avoid posting model runs unless there is very high confidence, especially at longer lead times
- Use the unified key messages to quickly dispel rumors going viral

Links and Resources

- [Austin/San Antonio Integrated Warning Teams](#)
A collection of recent IWT meeting notes and pictures.
- [NWSChat](#)
Not on NWSChat? Please consider signing up and joining the information sharing during weather events.
- [NWSChat 2.0](#)
Information on improvements coming to NWSChat later in 2023. NWSChat 2.0 will run on Slack, a secure and reliable platform that offers new features, such as photo and video sharing and cross-device compatibility. We are excited about these capabilities to improve message coordination!

- [South-Central Texas Briefing Dashboard](#)
This is best viewed on a laptop or desktop. Currently viewing on a mobile device can be cumbersome. We hope to improve that in the future. There is a lot currently on this dashboard. If you have any comments on either streamlining or adding additional features and information please send them to jason.runyen@noaa.gov
- [South-Central Texas Winter Weather Probabilities](#)
This is a hidden link. As the IWT group members discussed today, it is thought that this information could serve some use to some key decision makers, however we prefer not to have this public facing due to misinterpretation that can result in the general public.
- [Understanding Winter Weather Probabilities](#)
Additional information on how to interpret winter weather probabilistic information.
- [Winter Storm Severity Index](#)
Graphical depiction of anticipated overall impacts to society due to winter weather.
- [Winter Safety and Preparation](#)
NWS graphics IWT partners can use. Additional seasonal safety and preparation can be found [here](#).
- [Words of Estimative Probability and What They Mean to the Public](#)
Research has been done on the use of with respect to the chance of thunderstorms. More research needed on winter events.
- [Communicating Probability Information](#)
Additional recommendations based on social science studies can be found here: