What is a Watch and a Warning?

The National Weather Service (NWS) is the "official" Federal government voice for issuing life threatening flood or weather warnings to the public. You can reach their Websites at:

- **NWS Seattle** (http://www.wrh.noaa.gov/seattle) serves northwest Washington from Lewis and Grays Harbor counties northward.
- **NWS Portland** (http://www.wrh.noaa.gov/portland) serves the counties along the Columbia river in southwest Washington.
- **NWS Spokane** (http://www.wrh.noaa.gov/spokane) serves northeast Washington from Chelan to Garfield and Asotin counties.
- **NWS Pendleton** (http://www.wrh.noaa.gov/pendleton) serves south central Washington from Kittitas to Columbia counties.

![Map of Washington state showing NWS Seattle, NWS Portland, and NWS Spokane regions]  

The NWS issues flood and weather **watches, warnings, and advisories** in the effort to help protect lives and property.

- **Watch** - The risk of hazardous flood or weather conditions have increased, but its occurrence, location, and/or timing is uncertain. It is usually issued 12-to 36-hours prior to the potential event. A Watch is intended to provide enough lead time so those who need to do so, can set emergency plans in motion.
- **Warning** - When hazardous flood or weather conditions are occurring, are imminent, or have a very high probability of occurrence. A Warning is typically issued within 12-hours of a life or property-threatening event.
- **Advisory** - Less serious conditions that can cause significant inconvenience, and if caution is not exercised, could lead to situations that may threaten life and/or property.
**National Weather Service**

**Outlook/Watch/Warning Terminology**

*Increasing confidence that event will occur...*

**Weather/Flood Outlook**

- **OUTLOOK**: Issued as initial notice of a potential hazardous weather or flooding event. The outlook raises public awareness of the possibility of a severe weather or flooding event. Plans may be made to prepare for the event, should the outlook be upgraded to a watch. An outlook is issued 72-36 hours before the occurrence of the event.

**Weather/Flood Watch**

- **WATCH**: Issued when the probability of a hazardous weather or flooding event has increased significantly, but its occurrence, location, or timing is still uncertain. The public can set their plans in motion to prepare for the event. A watch is issued from 36 to 12 hours before the occurrence of the event.

**Weather/Flood Warning**

- **WARNING**: Issued when a hazardous weather or flooding event is occurring, is imminent, or has a high probability of occurrence within 12 hours. A warning is used for conditions posing a threat to life and/or property. The National Weather Service is the single official voice that issues warnings for life-threatening hazards.