Storm season is rolling in, which means the news will be dominated with weather advisories, watches and warnings. While all these terms cover exceptional weather events, they differ in meaning and severity. It is the responsibility of Environment and Climate Change Canada to issue Advisories, Watches and Warnings.

**Advisories**

Advisories can be used to cover a wide array of deteriorating weather conditions and are frequently used to describe weather events that can be cause for public concern.

Advisories can be issued before watches and warnings or they can be issued to indicate severe weather in a long-term forecast.

**Watches**

Watches are issued when there is the potential for severe weather.

When conditions indicate severe weather is forming, a watch will be released to make the public aware of what could happen.

For example, a tornado watch would mean there is a good chance that a tornado will form in the affected area, whereas a tornado warning would mean a tornado is occurring or about to occur and those in the region should take cover immediately.

**Warnings**

A warning is the next step in the process.

Warnings are issued when that severe weather is actually occurring or is imminent.

Identifying Watches and Warnings

- **Tornado Watches** occur when conditions favorable for a severe thunderstorm with a tornado are imminent.

- **Tornado Warnings** occur when a tornado has been reported or there is evidence a tornado is imminent.

- **Blizzard Warnings** are issued when sustained winds of at least 40 kilometres an hour reduce visibility with blowing snow to 400 metres or less for at least four hours.

This means that even if a winter storm rolls through with heavy snow and low visibility at times, it will not be classified as a blizzard until it hits that criteria.

- **Severe Thunderstorm Watch** is issued if there is the potential for the development of a thunderstorm with either wind gusts of 90 kilometres an hour or greater, hail with a diameter of two centimetres or greater, or heavy rainfall (with 50 millimetres or more within one hour).

- **Severe Thunderstorm Warning** would be issued if a cell was spotted on radar with one or more of the weather conditions listed above occurring.
Helpful applications in emergency preparedness

**Alert Ready – Canada’s Emergency Alert System**

Alert Ready is a nationwide emergency alert system issued by authorized government agencies designed to inform Canadians about emergency concerns in their areas with an alert sent to your phone by text, television or radio. Wireless providers have also collaborated with the government to allow text messages to be sent to mobile devices across Canada, provided that they are connected to a 4G network.

Test messages may be sent to your device to ensure that the Alert Ready system is up and running. You can learn about the test schedule in your area through the Alert Ready website.

**Alert London**

The City of London has implemented an emergency mass notification system to alert Londoners during a community-wide emergency. This notification system allows the City greater efficiency in helping to distribute timely information and instructions exactly where they are needed. In the event of an emergency, Alert London will provide critical public safety messages. The system is designed to reach you at your preferred point of contact (text or voice), using the information you use to register online.

**WeatherCAN**

Receive weather alert notifications in your area, as well as in your saved locations, wherever you are in Canada. Get your latest forecast information directly from Canada’s official weather source.

**@PrepareLondon**

Follow @PrepareLondon on Twitter for emergency public awareness campaigns and educational opportunities to learn more about emergency preparedness from the City’s Emergency Management Team through training sessions.

Check Environment Canada’s Weather office site for forecasts, radar, warnings, and links to other weather related information at weather.gc.ca

For more tips on emergency preparedness:
london.ca/emergency
ontario.ca/emo
GetPrepared.ca