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Service Change Notice 23-03
National Weather Service Headquarters Silver Spring MD
430 PM EST Tue Jan 10 2023

To: Subscribers:
 -NOAA Weather Wire Service
 -Emergency Managers Weather Information Network
 -Satellite Broadcast Network/NOAAPort
 NOAA Weather Radio All Hazards Listeners
 Other NWS Partners, Users and Employees

From: Craig Hodan
 Chief, NWS Dissemination Systems Branch

Subject: Adoption of New Upper Limit for Alert Duration of NOAA Weather Radio All Hazards Specific Area Message Encoding Alerts: Effective on or after February 16, 2023

The NWS will phase in the adoption of a new upper limit for the alert duration of NOAA Weather Radio All Hazards (NWR) Specific Area Message Encoding (SAME) alerts, beginning on or after February 16, 2023. All NWS Weather Forecast Offices (WFOs) will enable the use of the 99.5 hour alert duration by July 2023.

The alert duration is the amount of time after an alert's original issue time that the alert message remains valid. At the end of the alert duration time period, the alert information will have been updated or the alert is no longer in effect. The alert duration determines how long a radio receiver or connected devices should display the received alert as being current.

The NWS reviewed this change with SAME weather radio and public alert receiver manufacturers. The NWS is not aware of any impact on the ability of existing receivers to trigger the critical alerting functions when an alert is first issued. However, after a receiver's alert function is activated for an alert with a duration longer than six hours, many receivers may not remain in the alert mode for the intended period of time or display the alert duration correctly (if capable). For more information, please contact the receiver manufacturer. The NWS encourages receiver manufacturers to accommodate the 99.5 hour upper limit in new weather and public alert receivers.

The prior NWR SAME implementation limited alert duration to six hours. This is inadequate for some weather and non-weather alerts longer than six hours. Adopting the new NWR SAME alert duration upper limit affects both Non-Weather Emergency Messages (NWEM) received via the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA's) Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS) and Weather Messages (e.g., NWS watches and warnings) broadcast on NWR with the SAME alert tones.

The significant and positive outcome in adopting the new upper limit is for recipients of NWR and the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC's) Emergency Alert System (EAS) weather and non-weather alerts in effect for longer than six hours. The alert duration indicators on new weather and public alert receivers and in EAS radio messages or television screen crawls will display the true alert duration instead of the limited 6-hour time period for the longer durations.

Adopting the 99.5 hour upper limit for alert duration for NWR SAME alerts provides more consistent messaging across multiple dissemination systems. The 99.5 hour upper limit is also consistent with the current upper limit allowed by IPAWS and EAS.

More detailed information is available online at:

<https://www.weather.gov/nwr/samealertduration>

For more information, please contact:

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National Service Change Notices are online at:

<https://www.weather.gov/notification/>

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