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Service Change Notice 23-77
National Weather Service Headquarters Silver Spring MD
500 PM EDT Thu Jun 29 2023

To: Subscribers:
 -NOAA Weather Wire Service
 -Emergency Managers Weather Information Network
 -NOAAPort
 Other NWS Partners, Users and Employees

From: Stephen Bieda III, Chief
 Severe, Fire, Public and Winter Weather Services Branch

Subject: Changes to Public Forecast Zones for WFO Anchorage, AK: Effective September 19, 2023

Effective September 19, 2023, at 1:00 PM Alaska Daylight Time (AKDT), 2100 Coordinated Universal Time (UTC), the NWS Weather Forecast Office in Anchorage, AK (AFC) will complete localized changes to the Public Forecast Zones in South Central Alaska. These changes will impact surrounding towns and Native lands of Girdwood and Eklutna. After this change, all forecasts and related products will use the zone numbers and names shown in Table 2 below. More comprehensive changes to Public and Fire Weather Forecast Zones are planned by the NWS Anchorage Forecast Office in the future to reduce overalerting across the remainder of the Anchorage County Warning Area (CWA).

If September 19, 2023 is declared a Critical Weather Day, this implementation will be postponed to September 21, 2023 at 2100 UTC. Any postponement of the implementation will be announced by an update to this Service Change Notice and on the Anchorage Weather Forecast Office (WFO) webpage.

Minor adjustments are also being made to land/marine boundaries in the public and marine weather forecast zones. These changes and those noted above will result in more geographically-precise forecast, watch and warning products and will enhance web-based graphical product consistency and appearance. These changes are also intended to help reduce the overalerting effects from the current zones via NOAA Weather Radio All Hazards (NWR) and the Emergency Alert System (EAS) dissemination modalities.

Zones are being realigned to reduce overalerting of weather hazards across South Central AK. The new zones are listed in Table 2. Although zone numbers are changing, some zones are retaining the same name due to changes in boundaries being minor. It should be noted that in Alaska, all Universal Geographic Codes (UGCs) use the UGC-Zone (UGC-Z) format.

Table 1: Universal Geographic Codes (UGC): Current Public Forecast Zone Names

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AKZ101: Anchorage
AKZ111: Matanuska Valley
AKZ125: Western Prince William Sound
AKZ131: Northeast Prince William Sound
AKZ141: Copper River Basin
  
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Table 2: UGC: New Public Forecast Zone Names

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AKZ102: Anchorage
AKZ103: East Turnagain Arm
AKZ112: Matanuska Valley
AKZ126: Western Prince William Sound
AKZ132: Northeast Prince William Sound
AKZ142: Copper River Basin
  
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Table 3: NWS Products Affected by the WFO Anchorage, AK Public Forecast Zone Changes

Product Name	WMO Heading	AWIPS ID
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Area Forecast Discussion	FXAK68 PAFC	AFDAFC
Avalanche Weather Guidance	FWAK48 PAFC	AVGAFC
Special Avalanche Bulletin	WWAK88 PAFC	SABAFC
Coastal Flood Watch/Warning/Statement	WHAK41 PAFC	CFWAER
Special Weather Statement	WWAK81 PAFC	SPSAER
Public Information Statement	NOAK48 PAFC	PNSAFC
Zone Weather Forecast	FPAK51 PAFC	ZFPAER
Winter Weather Watch/Warning/Advisory	WWAK41 PAFC	WSWAER
Non-Precipitation Watch/Warning/Advisory	WWAK71 PAFC	NPWAER
Fire Weather Forecast	FNAK51 PAFC	FWFAER
Red Flag Warning	WWAK61 PAFC	RFWAER
Tsunami Warning	WEPA41 PAAQ	TSUWCA
Flood/Flash Flood Watch	WGAK68 PAFC	FFAAFC
Flood Warning	WGAK58 PAFC	FLWAFC
Flash Flood Warning	WGAK58 PAFC	FFWAFC
Flood Statement	WGAK88 PAFC	FLSAFC
Point Forecast Matrix	FOAK51 PAFC	PFMAER
Flood Potential Outlook	FGAK78 PAFC	ESFAFC
Short Term Forecast	FPAK78 PAFC	NOWAFC

NWS partners and users will need to make necessary changes to their communications systems to accommodate these weather forecast zone changes.

NWR users with Specific Area Message Encoding (SAME) receivers do not need to make any changes to their current SAME location code or to the transmitter they have been monitoring to continue receiving warning notifications for their county equivalent. However, all listeners will notice the elimination of some existing public forecast zone names and/or the introduction of some new public forecast zone names with NWR broadcasts as detailed in Tables 1 and 2.

Preliminary shapefiles for public forecast zones are available online at:

<https://www.weather.gov/gis/PublicZones>

<https://www.weather.gov/gis/FireZones>

<https://www.weather.gov/gis/Counties>

<https://www.weather.gov/gis/MarineZones>

Since there are NWS partners with systems associating NWS public zones with county equivalent names and/or Federal Information Processing Series (FIPS) codes, the updated zone-county correlation file is online at:

<https://www.weather.gov/gis/ZoneCounty>

Final versions of these shapefiles will be available on or around Tuesday, July 18, 2023.

A graphical depiction of this change is online at:

<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/7cc83e567c764d9d86eb8553d1b89e2a>

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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