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Covid-19: Changes to EA Flood Warning Service

Background

The Environment Agency (EA) are currently planning for how to protect our flood warning service if severe resource constraints prevent their usual level of operation during the Coronavirus pandemic period.

The Coronavirus pandemic is anticipated to place extraordinary pressure on the Environment Agency, particularly as sickness and other absences peak. Consequently, they propose some changes to the Flood Warning Service so they can continue to issue alerts and warnings wherever reasonable and practicable in the current circumstances. These changes are also intended to preserve their ability to provide warnings where most necessary and to support their activities during the Coronavirus pandemic period to protect lives and livelihoods.

Changes to the Flood Warning Service

The EA's flood warning service provides three types of messages that help people prepare for flooding and take action:

- Flood Alerts – flooding is possible; be prepared
- Flood Warnings – flooding is expected; immediate action required
- Severe Flood Warnings – severe flooding; danger to life

In order to sustain an effective flood warning service during the Coronavirus pandemic, the EA will be making some minor changes to the service.

These measures are being introduced to ensure they protect the critical Flood Warning and Severe Flood Warning services, which protect lives and livelihoods, whilst minimising disruption and potential anxiety in communities.

Flood Alerts

The EA will Issue Flood Alerts by exception only.

The EA will only issue Flood Alerts where:

- Spray / waves overtopping may cause risk to life
- Lives may be at risk due to minor road closures
- Livelihoods depend on them in farming communities
- The Alert will prompt an operational action by communities or partners, for example putting out property level flood defences.

However, they will not issue Flood Alerts for:

- Minor spray/wave-overtopping from the sea;
- Flooding of fields, recreation land and car parks where there are no actions for the public or partners;

- Flooding of minor road infrastructure that doesn't lead to road closure;
- Localised surface water flooding (i.e. overflowing drains due to heavy storms)

Flood Warnings and Severe Flood Warnings

There will be no change to the issuing of Severe Flood Warnings, where there is risk to life, or Flood Warnings where flooding is expected.

Message Update frequency

The EA will only update fluvial Flood Alerts, Flood Warnings and Severe Flood Warning messages once a day (During 0900-1700) unless there is a significant change to the forecast impacts. If that is the case they will update these messages more frequently to reflect the ongoing flood incident. Tidal alerts and warnings will be updated twice a day after each tide.

When will this be happening?

The EA are looking to implement these changes on 24 April 2020.

NFU here for You

The NFU have been and will continue to be in contact with the EA at all levels during this crisis. We have assurances from the EA that their flood warning service is a critical service and during COVID-19 they will be ensuring that they maintain this first class service in order to protect lives and livelihoods.

The important thing is that the EA will be maintaining the service and will continue to update alerts, warnings and severe flood warnings if the situation changes and on a frequent basis. Therefore members can be reassured that if the flood outlook situation changes within a day or several times within a day, the flood warning service will reflect that to give everyone the time to take any necessary action.

If you have any questions please contact your Regional Environment Advisor.