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Hazardous weather predicted for Tri-County Area

By Jeff M. Hardison © Jan. 2, 2018 at 4:07 p.m.

TRI-COUNTY AREA -- The National Weather Service offices in Ruskin and Jacksonville are alerting people to the high probability of hazardous weather during the rest of this week in Levy, Dixie and Gilchrist counties.

A 2:39 p.m. weather advisory from Ruskin shows there is a "WINTER WEATHER ADVISORY IN EFFECT FROM 4 AM TO 9 AM EST WEDNESDAY FOR LEVY COUNTY."

The alert goes on to note "Low pressure will intensify over the northern Bahamas overnight with moisture wrapping into the northern half of Florida. The moisture will combine with an unseasonably cold airmass and an approaching upper level system to cause rain.

"A small part of northern Levy County will reach freezing and freezing rain is expected late tonight. Most of the county will remain above freezing."

It notes earlier in the text that "This Hazardous Weather Outlook is for West Central And Southwest Florida."

MARINE IMPACTS

"Boating conditions will be hazardous to all small craft through late tonight and mariners are urged to check with the latest forecasts before finalizing plans."

Wednesday (Jan. 3) through Monday (Jan. 8), there is an "EXCESSIVE COLD IMPACT."

"Temperatures will be well below normal for much of the upcoming week. Overnight lows near or below freezing can be expected across portions of west central and southwest Florida into the weekend. Wind chill values make it feel even colder with wind chill values in the teens and 20s possible."

(Freezing is 32 degrees Fahrenheit.)

As a gauge, **The Weather Bug 10-Day Forecast** shows the following for Chiefland (North of Chiefland probably is going to be colder.)

Today, Jan. 2 -- Low tonight of 34 with a 60 percent chance of a frozen mix of rain and sleet.

Wednesday (Jan. 3) -- 43 to **28** degrees Fahrenheit with freezing rain in the day and clear at night.

Thursday (Jan. 4) -- 46 to **26** degrees Fahrenheit sunny in the day and clear at night.

Friday (Jan. 5) -- 45 to **27** degrees Fahrenheit sunny in the day and clear at night.

Saturday (Jan. 6) 47 to **32** degrees Fahrenheit sunny in the day and clear at night.

And then, Sunday (Jan. 7) through Thursday (Jan. 11), there is no more freezing temperature times predicated as of now (4:07 p.m. on Tuesday, Jan. 2).

Water management district warns of freeze damage to pipes

Katelyn Potter, Communications Director

Suwannee River Water Management District

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LIVE OAK -- The Suwannee River Water Management District (District) is urging residents and business owners to take preventative measures to protect pipes, irrigation systems and even crops as many across the District face freezing temperatures throughout the week.

Weather forecasts are predicting three nights of hard and light freezes (sustained temperatures below 30 degrees Fahrenheit) throughout the District; including the possibility of hail and/or frozen precipitation Tuesday evening through Wednesday afternoon.

If left unprotected, freezing temperatures can cause water pipes and irrigation systems to burst or

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break as water freezes and expands. These broken systems can cause significant damage to homes and businesses as water melts and leaks when temperatures rise.

“Freezing temperatures not only pose a threat to pipes and water systems, but if leaks occur, they can be a notable source of water loss when added up amongst homes and businesses across our region,” said Hugh Thomas, Executive Director for the District. “Taking precautionary measures now, can save a great deal of headache, and water, later.”

Local farmers also face the risk of loss as temperatures plummet. Hard freezes can wreak havoc on fruit and vegetable crops throughout the region, specifically blueberries and citrus. Similar to dripping faucets to protect pipes, farmers will irrigate crops to protect against frost damage.

“The wise use of water to protect and prevent calamity during a freeze is an important precaution every homeowner, business and farmer should take to prevent unnecessary resource and water loss,” said Thomas.

The following steps are recommended to help prevent frozen pipes and irrigation systems:

- Wrap pipes located in under-insulated or uninsulated areas like attics, crawl spaces, porches or outdoor buildings.
- Use faucet covers, rags, papers, trash bags or plastic foam.
- Cover vents around the home’s foundation.
- If possible, shut off outside water spigots and drain lines. If a shut off is not available, turn on outdoor faucets and spigots to create a trickle or drip stream. Moving water is less likely to freeze than stagnant water.
- Cover or move plants indoors to protect from frost. Water plants thoroughly as the water acts as an insulator. Remove coverings once the temperatures warm back up.
- Bring pets indoors or ensure adequate protection from the cold with windbreaks and thermal support.
- Insulate and cover well components at land surface, bring water hoses indoors.
- If you have a swimming pool, either drain the circulation system or run the pump motor.
- If pipes freeze, water will not pass through the faucets. Turn off the water at the shut-off valve and call a plumber for help.

The mission of the Suwannee River Water Management District is to protect and manage water resources using science-based solutions to support natural systems and the needs of the public. The District holds true to the belief of water for nature, water for people. Headquartered in Live Oak, the District serves 15 surrounding North Central Florida counties.

For more information about the District, visit www.mysuwanneeriver.com.