

Understanding the Weather Information

Department of Meteorology issues especial bulletin for weather related and Tsunami hazards, in addition to the weather forecast issued several times per day. Though the general forecast can be used by public for day to day activities, especial bulletin must be responded properly by the community. The question is whether the community is able to understand properly the information given by the Department of Meteorology (DOM). As the community base early warning system is more effective, community should be familiar with the words and signals used in the weather related and Tsunami bulletins.

Several wordings are used in the weather forecast according to the possibility of weather occurrence spatially and temporally. "Isolated", "at a few places" or "few showers" are the indication of low possibility. "Scattered showers", "At Several places" are used for normal weather situation and there is no possibility for hazards. But the wordings "Occasional", "Intermittent", "Widespread", "at most places" are used for high possibilities and the possibility for weather related hazards is also high.

DOM is able to indicate the coming changes a few days prior to the weather event.

eg.

Extremely heavy rain and strong winds occurred over Jaffna peninsula on the 25th night in November 2008 causing floods and several damages. The highest daily rainfalls were 197.5 mm and 389.8 at Jaffna on 24th and 25th respectively.

The weather forecast issued by the Department of Meteorology at 0530hrs on 21st November 2008 says "Atmospheric conditions are getting favorable for showery weather over the Eastern and Northern parts of the island" This indicates that the bad weather is expected in the Eastern and Northern parts.

Thawalama, Kalutara, Kosgama, Dambulla areas were flooded on the 10th April 2009. The recorded heaviest daily rainfall was 201 mm at Neboda on 10th. It has been indicated in the forecast issued on the 08th April 2009 as "Under the influence of Inter-Tropical Convergence Zone, prevailing evening thunderstorms can be enhanced during next few days. Showers can occur during the morning too, if this activity zone will move to Sri Lankan areas".

High intense rainfall would be expected if the weather conditions are triggered by any kind of weather systems such as active Monsoon, upper air disturbances, Wave type disturbances, low pressure areas, Depressions. Cyclone, Feeder Bands, Inter tropical Convergence Zone, Convergence or Confluence of wind flow and Meso Scale Convective Complexes. It is not necessary to understand all these meteorological words but the important is to be vigilant about the forecast expecting bad weather if it mentions that such phenomena is affecting the weather.

Signal levels and colours (e.g. orange for alert and red for evacuation etc.) have been introduced in the weather related and Tsunami bulletins for easy and quick understanding.

Bulletin	Colour	Action
Information	White	Ready
Alert/Watch	Orange	Get Set
Warning	Red	Go

More details about the signal levels and colours are available in this web site.

For any queries regarding weather related disasters and Tsunami, please contact

Department of Meteorology Head office: 011-2694846, 7, 8, 2684746, 26868686

Airport Branch: 011-2252721, 2263924, 25, 26

Dialog subscribers can hear the recorded weather forecast and warnings, dialing “555”.

Department of Meteorology
Colombo 07