

Winter Storm Naming in the United States

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Winter storm naming in the United States has been used by [The Weather Channel](#) (TWC) since 2011, when the cable network informally used the previously-coined name "Snowtober" for a [2011 Halloween nor'easter](#). In November 2012, TWC began systematically naming winter storms, starting with the [November 2012 nor'easter](#) it named "Winter Storm Athena." TWC compiled a list of winter storm names for the 2012–13 winter season. It would only name those storms that are "disruptive" to people, said Bryan Norcross, a TWC senior director. TWC's decision was met with criticism from other weather forecasters, who called the practice self-serving and potentially confusing to the public.

Background

During October 2012 after informally using a the previously-coined name "Snowtober" for the [2011 Halloween nor'easter](#), The Weather Channel announced that it was going to start naming winter storms from a predetermined list of names. The Weather Channel argued that the winter storm names would improve communications of storm warnings and help reduce storm impacts.

Winter storm names

A few of the winter storm names used by March 2013 include Athena, Brutus, Caesar, Gandolf, Khan, and Nemo. For the 2013-2014 season, The Weather Channel published a list of 26 more names to be used for winter storms, with the name Atlas as the first name of the season. On October 2nd, 2014, The Weather Channel released 25 new names with the 26th "W" to be voted on by viewers. Names were again made for Winter Storms of the 2014-15 season, and for the 2015-16 season. Names were later updated for the 2015-16 season.

United States government naming policy

The [U.S. government](#)-operated [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration](#) (NOAA) (a division of which—the [National Hurricane Center](#)—has named [hurricanes](#) for many years) and its main division—the [National Weather Service](#) (NWS)—did not acknowledge TWC's winter storm names and asked its forecast offices to refrain from using the TWC names. In a November 2012 memo, it requested that its employees avoid referring to storms by name. NWS spokesperson Susan Buchanan stated, "The National Weather Service does not name winter storms because a winter storm's impact can vary from one location to another, and storms can weaken and redevelop, making it difficult to define where one ends and another begins."

The National Weather Service office in [Buffalo, New York](#) named [lake-effect snow](#) storms in its coverage area through the 2012–13 season. In 2013, the office removed references to its previous history of naming those storms and now only refers to the storms by date.

Private entity naming practices

Private weather forecaster [AccuWeather](#) disagreed with the practice of naming winter storms in 2013. AccuWeather president Joel N. Myers stated in February 2013, "The Weather Channel has confused media spin with science and public safety. We [...] have found this is not good science and will mislead the public." In defense of TWC's practice, TWC's Norcross said, "The fact is, a storm with a name is easier to follow, which will mean fewer surprises and more preparation."

In February 2013, media organizations such as [The New York Times](#) and [The Washington Post](#) stated that they would not use a name such as "Winter Storm Nemo" for the [February 2013 nor'easter](#). However, some outlets such as New York mayor [Michael Bloomberg](#)'s office used the Twitter hashtag "#nemo" to refer to the storm. Tom Kines of AccuWeather stated, "The Weather Channel probably names the storms because it gets the publicity"; as a privately owned weather service, TWC relies on its TV audience and page views for revenue.