



Winter Weather Precipitation

Working or driving in cold weather conditions can be a challenge, and sometimes understanding the forecast is equally so. Knowing what type of cold weather precipitation to expect makes it easier to dress appropriately, to schedule your working hours, and to have what you need on site for your employees to stay warm and reduce the impact that the conditions have on their health and safety.

Types of Cold Weather Precipitation

- Freezing Rain - Rain drops that fall through a thin layer of freezing air just above the surface, without enough time to freeze before reaching the ground. Because they are “supercooled,” the raindrops freeze falling onto a surface that is below freezing temperature. This creates a glaze of ice on the ground, trees, power lines, or other objects.
- Sleet - Rain drops that freeze into ice pellets before reaching the ground. Sleet usually bounces when hitting the surface and does not stick to objects. However, it can accumulate like snow and cause a hazard to motorists.
- Snow - Cloud temperature is cold enough to form snowflakes in and the air above the ground is not warm enough for those flakes to melt.

Types of Snow

- Snow Flurries - Snow that falls for short durations and with varying intensity; flurries usually produce no accumulation, or only a light dusting of snow.
- Snow Showers - Snow falling at varying intensities for brief periods of time. Some accumulation is possible.
- Snow Squalls - A brief, but intense snowfall that greatly reduces visibility and which is often accompanied by strong winds.
- Blowing Snow - Wind-driven snow particles raised by the wind to moderate or great heights above the ground; the horizontal visibility at eye level is generally very poor.
- Drifting snow - Snow on the ground that is blown by the wind to a height of less than 5 to 6-1/2 feet above the surface.
- Thunder snow - Although thunderstorms are less common in the winter, sometimes lightning can occur within snowstorms and is called thunder snow.

Types of Winter Storms

A winter storm is a combination of heavy snow, blowing snow and/or dangerous wind chills. A winter storm is life-threatening.



- Blizzards are dangerous winter storms that are a combination of blowing snow and wind resulting in very low visibilities – ¼ mile or less. While heavy snowfalls and severe cold often accompany blizzards, they are not required. Sometimes strong winds pick up snow that has already fallen, creating a ground blizzard.
- An ice storm is a storm which results in the accumulation of at least .25” of ice on exposed surfaces. They create hazardous driving and walking conditions. Tree branches and powerlines can easily snap under the weight of the ice.

SAFETY REMINDER

Keeping an eye on the forecast can make planning employee work schedules easier and can help to reduce last minute changes.