

# Blizzards

## INTRODUCTION



Blizzards are strong storms with cold temperatures, high winds and blowing snow. These severe snowstorms are especially dangerous for people who are on the road. This is mainly due to the whiteout conditions that make it very difficult for people to see. The visibility in some blizzards is as little as 10 feet! Sometimes, people get trapped in their cars and might even freeze to death when a blizzard rages for a long time. When the storm is over, cars are often covered by a thick layer of snow which makes it difficult to find them.

In order to qualify as a blizzard, the wind speeds must be at least 35 miles per hour, the temperatures must be below 20°F and the storm must last for at least 3 hours.

Blizzards that occur in the Northeast region of the United States are known as Nor'easters. They get their name from the direction of the oncoming winds. The area borders the Atlantic Ocean, which sometimes dumps massive amount of snow over the region. The Midwestern region of the United States and central Canada are often called "blizzard country". The area is often struck by severe winter storms and the people have to deal with the dangers and inconveniences of it.



# Blizzards

## HOW THEY FORM

Blizzards need three conditions to form.

First, cold air is needed that can cause snowfall. The cold air must be present near the ground and also at the heights of the clouds. If there is no cold air near the ground, the falling snow would melt.



Second, there must be enough warm and moist air to form clouds and cause precipitation. Moist air is also called water vapor. When winds blow over an ocean, sea or lake, they create water vapor. When the air is warm enough, it rises and forms clouds.

Third, warm air must rise above cold air in order to develop a blizzard. This usually occurs when cold winds from the North or South Pole blow towards the equator and warm winds from the equator blow towards the poles of the Earth. When the warm and cold air meet, massive clouds begin to take shape resulting in the creation of a difference in air pressure.

The different air pressures can result in strong winds. These clouds carry so much water vapor which would eventually be released as snow.



# Dangerous Blizzards

## IN HISTORY

In 1888, two major blizzards occurred in the United States. The Schoolhouse Blizzard raged across the Great Plains. Many children were stranded in the schoolhouses. About 235 people died in the massive snowstorm. Most of the people who died included children who tried to walk home from school.

The other storm occurred in New York, New Jersey, Massachusetts and Connecticut. This blizzard is known as the Great Blizzard of 1888. Some areas had up to 50 inches of snowfall and many people were caught in their homes for up to a week! More than 30 people died in this huge storm.

The deadliest blizzard in history occurred in Iran in 1972. The southern part of the country experienced more than 10 feet of snowfall. The worst hit areas even had 26 feet of snow! About 200 villages were completely wiped out and more than 4,000 people died.

The most destructive blizzard in the recent history of the United States occurred in the Mid-Atlantic region in 2010. It was a major Nor'easter that left hundreds of thousands of people without electricity.

**Exercise 5:** Unscramble the words, hints are given below.

1) nair                      \_ \_ \_ \_ \_

Where did the deadliest blizzard in history occur?

2) apnrehsileagtt       \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_

Where did the Schoolhouse Blizzard cause massive destruction?

3) nnceoctutic           \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_

A state which was affected by the Great Blizzard of 1888.

4) orneaerts             \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_

A blizzard that occurs in the Northeast region of the United States.

# Things to know

## ABOUT BLIZZARDS

When you are caught in a car during a severe snow storm, it is important to stay in the car. Many people who left their vehicle have walked in circles, because they couldn't see where they were going during the heavy snowfall.

If you really need to travel by car during a blizzard, it is very important to bring an emergency aid kit in case you get trapped in the snow.

Rochester, New York, is a city in the US which gets maximum snow, with around 94 inches of snow per year.

It is not a good idea to eat snow when you are caught in a blizzard. The snow will lower your body temperature.

The winds of a blizzard can be very strong. Some may even be more powerful than hurricane winds.

**Exercise 6:** Are the statements true (T) or false (F)?

- 1) When you are caught in a blizzard (    )  
you should eat snow to survive.
- 2) People should stay in their cars (    )  
when they are caught in a blizzard.
- 3) The city of Rochester is at (    )  
greatest risk to be struck by  
blizzards in the United States.
- 4) Some blizzards have stronger (    )  
winds than hurricanes.
- 5) When there is heavy snowfall, (    )  
people should walk in circles.

**What would you pack if you had to travel in a blizzard?**

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