

Public Information Statement
National Weather Service Albany NY
800 AM EDT Sun Oct 27 2024

...Winter Weather Awareness Week Begins...

October 27 to November 2 is Winter Weather Awareness Week in New York and New England.

The following is information on the types of snow events that impact eastern New York and western New England.

Heavy snow in eastern New York and northern New England is defined as 7 inches or more falling during a storm. Warnings are issued when these amounts are forecast and advisories are issued for lesser amounts of 3 to 4 inches or more in a 12 hour period.

Heavy snow can be produced by nor'easters, overrunning situations and lake effect. Lesser amounts of snow are often produced by Alberta clippers.

Nor'easters are intense areas of low pressure that typically move along the eastern seaboard. They usually bring strong northeast winds as they pass by. Some memorable nor'easters include the blizzard of March 2017 and the 3 nor'easters of March 2018.

Overrunning can also produce heavy snow and this occurs when warm air aloft flows over cold air near the surface. Overrunning occurs most often when a large dome of high pressure is located in southeastern Canada and a warm front is approaching our region from the south or southwest. The December 2020 snowstorm, which produced 2 to 3 feet of snow in 6-12 hours, was an overrunning event.

Snowfall rates in nor'easters and overrunning events can reach 4 to 6 inches per hour and these rates and near zero visibility can last for several hours.

Lake effect snows often occur in the late autumn and winter downwind of the great lakes when cold arctic air sweeps across the relatively warm waters of the lakes. Snow bands will typically form over and along the lee shores of the lakes and move downwind. These bands can result in locally heavy snow with reduced visibilities in narrow, localized areas.

The lake effect snow which impacts eastern New York usually originates downwind of Lake Ontario. The areas of eastern New York which receive the most lake effect snow include the southern Adirondacks...Mohawk Valley and northeastern Catskills.

An Alberta clipper is an area of low pressure that usually forms over the province of Alberta in Canada, east of the Rocky Mountains. Alberta clippers usually move very quickly southeast and usually bring light accumulations of snow as they cross our region. They also bring colder air from Canada in their wake.

Some snow terms which are commonly used include blizzard, blowing snow, snow squalls, snow showers and snow flurries.

A blizzard is a winter storm which has sustained winds or frequent gusts of 35 mph or more, with considerable falling and or blowing snow reducing the visibility to at or below one quarter mile, and these conditions persist for 3 hours or more.

Snow squalls are brief intense snow showers accompanied by strong gusty winds. They often produce instantaneous snow accumulation and blinding visibility. Snow squalls are responsible for many vehicle pile ups on interstate highways.

Blowing snow is wind driven snow that reduces visibility. Blowing snow may be falling snow and or snow on the ground picked up by the wind. Blowing snow may produce icy patches on otherwise dry roads.

Snow showers have snow falling at varying intensities for brief periods of time with some snow accumulation possible.

Snow flurries are light snow which falls with little or no snow accumulation.

Your Albany National Weather Service forecast office is available online and on social media. You can reach us at weather.gov/Albany, on facebook at NWSAlbany and tweet along on X @nwsalbany.

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