



Blizzards!

What they are and
what they aren't



Definition

- A **blizzard** is a severe winter storm condition characterized by low temperatures, strong winds, and heavy blowing snow.
- The term blizzard is sometimes misused by news media to describe a large winter storm that does not actually satisfy official blizzard criteria.





Where they occur

- Even though some areas are more likely to experience blizzards than others, it is possible for a blizzard to occur in any location where there are snow falls and high winds.
- In North America, blizzards are particularly common to the extreme portions of the Northeastern United States, the Northern Great Plains in the United States, Atlantic Canada, and the Canadian Prairie Provinces.

Technical Definition

In the United States, the National Weather Service defines a blizzard as sustained 35 mph winds which leads to blowing snow and causes visibilities of $\frac{1}{4}$ mile or less, lasting for at least 4 hours. Extremely cold temperatures with a wind chill of less than -25 °C



Whiteouts

- An extreme form of blizzard is a whiteout, when downdrafts coupled with snowfall become so severe that it is impossible to distinguish the ground from the air. People caught in a whiteout can quickly become disoriented, losing their sense of direction.



Where does the word come from?

- The Word 'Blizzard' was first used in 1870 during a severe snowstorm in Iowa and Minnesota, by an Estherville, Iowa newspaper. The word has its origins in boxing, referring to a volley of punches in Boxing. The word was first used by the USA signal corps weather service in 1876.

Great Blizzard of 1888

- The Great Blizzard of 1888 paralyzed the Northeastern United States. In that blizzard, 400 people were killed, 200 ships were sunk, and snowdrifts towered 15 to 50 feet high.
- Earlier that year, the Great Plains states were struck by the Schoolhouse Blizzard that left children trapped in schoolhouses and killed 235 people.



The Great Blizzard of '49

- The worst blizzard the U.S. has ever known. This famous blizzard also known as the "Great White Death" was actually a series of blizzards that lasted for seven weeks. They began in Wyoming and Colorado, then spread over most of the West. To save cattle and sheep, the U.S. Air Force dropped 1,500 tons of hay. More than 100 people and 1 million heads of livestock were killed in this deadly blizzard.



Safety

- To protect themselves when blizzards are forecast, people should have a checklist of things they need to do. On it should be:
- Fill bathtubs with water in case pipes freeze.
- Make sure windows and doors are tightly closed and anything movable in the yard is tied down or brought inside. Bring in pets too!
- Be sure to stock up on food, especially food that doesn't need to be cooked, refrigerated, or frozen.
- Have batteries for flashlights and radios. Unless it is necessary stay indoors.