

PUBLIC INFORMATION STATEMENT  
NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE BUFFALO NY  
800 AM EDT TUE OCT 27 2009

...THIS WEEK IS WINTER WEATHER AWARENESS WEEK IN NEW YORK...

GOVERNOR DAVID PATERSON HAS PROCLAIMED THE WEEK OF OCTOBER 25TH TO OCTOBER 31ST AS WINTER WEATHER AWARENESS WEEK IN THE EMPIRE STATE. THE NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE JOINS WITH THE GOVERNOR AND THE NEW YORK STATE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY IN PROMOTING WINTER WEATHER SAFETY TO ALL NEW YORKERS.

HEAVY SNOW CAN IMMOBILIZE A REGION AND PARALYZE A CITY, STRANDING COMMUTERS, CLOSING AIRPORTS, STOPPING THE FLOW OF SUPPLIES AND DISRUPTING SERVICES. ACCUMULATIONS OF SNOW CAN CAUSE ROOFS TO COLLAPSE AND KNOCK DOWN TREES AND POWER LINES. HOMES AND FARMS MAY BE ISOLATED FOR DAYS. THE COST OF SNOW REMOVAL, REPAIRING DAMAGES, AND THE LOSS OF BUSINESS CAN HAVE SEVERE ECONOMIC IMPACTS AND CITIES AND TOWNS.

HEAVY SNOW IN WESTERN AND NORTHERN NEW YORK IS DEFINED AS 7 INCHES OR MORE FALLING IN A 12 HOUR PERIOD, OR 9 INCHES OR MORE FALLING IN A 24 HOUR PERIOD.

MOST HEAVY SNOW IN WESTERN AND NORTHERN NEW YORK IS CAUSED BY LAKE EFFECT. AS ARCTIC AIR SWEEPS ACROSS THE RELATIVELY WARM WATERS OF THE LAKES ERIE AND ONTARIO, HEAVY SNOW FORMS AND FALLS DOWNSTREAM. SNOWFALL RATES CAN EXCEED 4 INCHES AN HOUR WHICH IS ENOUGH TO OVERWHELM MOST SNOW REMOVAL CREWS AND EQUIPMENT. STRONG WINDS OFTEN ACCOMPANY LAKE EFFECT SNOW WHICH CAUSE DEEP DRIFTS AND REDUCE VISIBILITY.

HEAVY SNOW CAN ALSO FALL AS THE RESULT OF LARGE STORMS CALLED NOREASTERS WHICH MOVE UP THE ATLANTIC COAST. WHEREAS LAKE EFFECT SNOW USUALLY FALLS IN NARROW BANDS, SNOW FROM NOREASTERS CAN BLANKET THOUSANDS OR SQUARE MILES.

LOOKING BACK AT THE HISTORICAL RECORD, WESTERN AND NORTHERN NEW YORK HAS HAD ITS SHARE OF DANGEROUS WINTER STORMS. ONE ONLY HAS TO REMEMBER BACK TO OCTOBER OF 2006 TO BE REMINDED HOW DANGEROUS EARLY SEASON WINTER STORMS CAN BE. UP TO TWO FEET OF HEAVY WET SNOW FELL ON LEAF LADEN TREES ACROSS THE NIAGARA FRONTIER. THE RESULTING POWER OUTAGES LASTED FOR UP TO TWO WEEKS.

AMONG ALL STORMS, THE BLIZZARD OF 1977 RANKS AS ONE OF THE WORST. WHILE ONLY ABOUT A FOOT OF SNOW FELL FROM JANUARY 28TH TO FEBRUARY 1ST, WIND GUSTS UP TO 75 MILES AN HOUR IN NIAGARA FALLS AND 69 MILES AN HOUR IN BUFFALO WHIPPED UP SNOW DRIFTS OVER 20 FEET DEEP, NEARLY TOPPING TELEPHONE POLES. THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE WERE STRANDED AWAY FROM THEIR HOMES AS ROADS BECAME CLOGGED AND IMPASSABLE. TWENTY-NINE PEOPLE DIED, MANY FROZEN TO DEATH IN THEIR BURIED CARS. PRESIDENT CARTER PROCLAIMED A FEDERAL DISASTER OVER A SEVEN COUNTY AREA.

ON NOVEMBER 20, 2000 A CRIPPLING LAKE EFFECT STORM STRUCK THE CITY OF BUFFALO AND THE ADJACENT NORTHERN SUBURBS. DURING THE AFTERNOON AND EVENING HOURS, SNOW FELL AT THE RATE OF 2 TO 4 INCHES PER HOUR. THUNDER AND LIGHTNING ACCOMPANIED THE BLINDING SNOW. BY THE TIME IT ENDED, TWO FEET OF SNOW PILED UP, AND TRAFFIC CAME TO A STANDSTILL. THOUSANDS WERE LEFT STRANDED AWAY FROM HOME. THEY SPENT THE NIGHT IN CARS, BUSES, SCHOOLS, SUPERMARKETS, OR AT WORK.

PEOPLE LIVING IN AND AROUND ROCHESTER WILL NOT SOON FORGET THE BLIZZARD OF MARCH 4, 1999. OVER TWO FEET OF SNOW ACCOMPANIED BY STRONG WINDS FORCED THE CLOSING OF THE NEW YORK STATE THRUWAY AND THE STRANDING OF THOUSANDS OF MOTORISTS. THE NATIONAL GUARD WAS CALLED ON TO HELP REMOVE CARS AND RESCUE THE MOTORISTS. POWER OUTAGES AFFECTED OVER 10,000 CUSTOMERS.

YOU CAN ALWAYS GET THE LATEST INFORMATION ON THREATENING WINTER STORMS, 24 HOURS A DAY, BY TUNING INTO NOAA WEATHER RADIO THE VOICE OF THE NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE.

THE NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE ENCOURAGES YOU TO PREPARE NOW FOR HEAVY SNOWS AND THE EFFECTS IT MAY HAVE ON THE REGION.