

Snow Squall Frequently Asked Questions

What is a snow squall?

- A snow squall is an intense short-lived burst of heavy snowfall that leads to a quick reduction in visibilities and is often accompanied by gusty winds. Snow squalls may be characterized by one main squall or multiple squalls.

What are the impacts associated with snow squalls?

- The combination of quick reductions in visibilities and sudden slick conditions on roadways can often lead to high speed wrecks, pileups, and subsequently injuries and fatalities. There is also a high economic impact as interstates can be shut down for hours.

When do snow squalls occur?

- They typically occur during the daytime hours, they can occur at any time of day.
- Like summertime thunderstorms, they can happen on days with partly cloudy skies.
- They are often associated with strong cold fronts and generally last less than 1 hour at any particular location.
- They are most common between November and March.

What is a snow squall warning?

- Issued for areas that will be impacted by snow squalls.
- Polygon warning typically an hour or less, similar to a Tornado or Severe Thunderstorm Warning.
- Will trigger an alert on your cell phone for the most dangerous squalls.

What should I do on a day with snow squalls?

- Remain alert to the latest forecast and travel conditions.
- Consider avoiding or delaying travel until the snow squall passes your location.
- Leave extra time if you must travel during snow squalls as visibilities and road conditions will change rapidly.
- Reduce your speed and turn on headlights! In a matter of seconds unrestricted visibilities can change to near zero.
- Don't slam on brakes! With roads being slick, this could contribute to loss of vehicle control and also increase the risk of a chain reaction crash.

What if I get caught in a pileup because of a snow squall?

- If stopped, DO NOT stand outside your vehicle on or near the roadway.
- If you can do so safely, get as far away from the roadway as possible.
- If you cannot safely exit your vehicle, remain seated inside your vehicle

Where can I go for more information?

- <https://www.weather.gov/safety/winter-snow-squall>
- <https://www.weather.gov/media/iln/winter/SnowSquallBrochure.pdf>
- <https://www.weather.gov/media/safety/Snow-Squall-IBW.pdf>