

Guide for Families

December:

Snowstorms and Winter Weather

Oh, the Weather Outside Is Frightful!

New York City winters often bring extreme cold temperatures, heavy snow, ice, sleet, and freezing rain. Plus coastal storms, called nor'easters, can bring high winds, flooding, power outages, and structural damage.

Of course schools close during the worst weather. But at other times, weather changes can occur quickly while students are in school. Even when winter weather isn't severe enough to close schools, it still needs to be taken seriously.

Let's get ready and stay safe when winter weather hits!

Weather Words: Watches and Warnings Issued by the National Weather Service

- **Winter Storm Watch:** Alerts the public to the possibility of severe weather conditions, such as heavy snow or ice. The watches are issued 24 to 36 hours in advance.
- **Winter Storm Warning:** Hazardous winter weather—such as heavy snow, heavy freezing rain, or heavy sleet—is occurring or definitely on its way. Issued 12 to 24 hours before the event is expected to begin. Can also be issued when heavy snow combined with strong winds of 25–34 mph will cause blowing or drifting snow.
- **Blizzard Watch:** Sustained winds of at least 35 mph and falling or blowing snow results in visibility at or below $\frac{1}{4}$ mile expected within 24 to 36 hours.
- **Blizzard Warning:** Sustained winds of at least 35 mph and falling or blowing snow resulting in visibility at or below $\frac{1}{4}$ mile expected within 16 hours.
- **Snow Advisory:** A low pressure system that will produce snow that may cause significant inconveniences but does not meet warning criteria. Amounts can range from 2 to 5 inches.
- **Heavy Snow Watch:** An average snowfall of 6 inches in 12 hours or 8 inches in 24 hours is expected.
- **Heavy Snow Warning:** Snowfall totaling 6 inches or more in 12 hours is strongly expected. The warning also can be issued when snowfall totaling 8 inches or more in 24 hours is strongly expected.

Did you know?

The biggest snowfall ever recorded in New York City happened February 11–12, 2006, when 26.9 inches of snow fell in Central Park.



Department of Education
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Quick activities to try at home:

- Winter weather definitely calls for being prepared. Did you update your emergency reference card, Go Bags, and emergency supply kit last month when you changed your clocks for “fall back”? If not, do it now! (While you're at it, throw in some packets of hot chocolate for a special treat if you get stuck indoors!)
- What winter weather events do you recall over the years? Were you prepared? What would you do differently? Spend a few minutes telling stories with your family and discussing the next steps.



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