

Stormy Weather

by *Lindsay Reed*

jlreed@email.unc.edu

Snow- why is this flaky precipitation feared? Being from St. Louis, where snowfall can accumulate to 62 inches annually, I am accustomed to a snowy landscape. If you reside in some regions of North Carolina where snowfall is rare, then here is some advice to stay safe in a winter wonderland.

Although a blizzard may not be a reality for your hometown or the town of Chapel Hill, it is important to realize that a few inches of snow can cause chaos. Having said this, one should also understand that there are many precautions one can take to function normally during snowy conditions. For example, a major concern of motorists is road conditions during snowfall. Snow is a solid form of precipitation, so it can be viewed as a weather condition similar to rain; nevertheless, snow can develop into ice, which makes driving more dangerous. In an effort to avoid skidding or colliding with guardrails and other cars, slow down. You may be an experienced driver, but you did not necessarily take your driving test during a winter storm. Icy roads make it difficult to control your vehicle due to the lack of friction between your tires and the pavement. It is an important precaution to slow down not only for your personal safety, but also to protect others.

If you become aware of a weather forecast that predicts snow, then make yourself prepared for the worst. Investing in salt for pavement (usually Calcium Chloride) makes the ice that may develop less dangerous by melting it. Secondly, keeping a snowbrush in your car allows one to have maximum visibility prior to driving during a snowfall. Once driving, one can simply utilize one's windshield wipers to maintain visibility. Also, keeping a blanket in your trunk is ideal in situations where your vehicle breaks down in the middle of a snowstorm. By staying warm, one can prevent hypothermia due to the cold temperature.

Precaution and awareness are the keys to remaining safe in a snowy environment. In other words, there really is not a reason to buy all of the bread and water at the local grocery stores. There is no need to stay locked in the house until springtime. Driving can transform from an easy task to a catastrophe, but reducing speed and maximizing visibility on the roads can prevent accidents. Keeping my advice in mind, the best way to stay safe during a snowstorm...buy a cell phone and tell them you'll be late.

