

New for 2018: Snow Squall Warnings



What is a Snow Squall?

Dangerous snow squalls can produce a quick burst of snowfall, greatly reducing visibility for motorists in a matter of seconds. These often “sneak up” on drivers on relatively clear days with dry roadway conditions. You can go from blue skies to zero visibility almost instantly as a snow squall travels across the road. Visibility loss is the primary hazard to the driver, but a slick roadway often makes it a recipe for multiple car pile-ups.

What to Look For

Starting January 3, 2018, the National Weather Service will be issuing a new *Snow Squall Warning* to alert motorists of these roadway hazards. Snow Squall Warnings will be similar to a severe thunderstorm or tornado warning, alerting of life-threatening snow squalls. These warnings will cover a small area for a short period of time, and impacted major roadways will be listed in the alert. Before traveling, check your local National Weather Service website to see if snow squalls are in the forecast so you can be alert for rapidly changing conditions. You may also consider delaying or adjusting travel plans.

Where to Get Them

Sign up for Snow Squall Warnings through your favorite weather service or application. Local media outlets, paid services, and other apps can send these alerts to your phone. Of course, you will need a safe way to receive these alerts while driving. A portable NOAA Weather Radio can be used, which sets off an alert tone and delivers a voice message of the alert.

What to Do When Alerted

If you’ve driven into a snow squall, it’s likely too late. Attempt to avoid the snow squall if possible. Pulling off at an exit, or taking an alternate, lower speed travel route is the best way to avoid a serious accident. If you do drive into a squall, avoid slamming on your brakes and reduce your speed.



Restrictions and Future Plans

The 2017-18 season is a trial year for the warnings, so the following Pennsylvania counties will not be included in the warnings for now: Berks, Bucks, Carbon, Chester, Crawford, Delaware, Erie, Lehigh, Montgomery, Monroe, Northampton, and Philadelphia. The NWS is working with agencies to send these alerts out through the Wireless Emergency Alert and Emergency Alert Systems in years to come, to better alert drivers on the hazards.

Why the Warning are Needed...

Snow squalls are one of the most immediately life threatening hazards to Pennsylvania motorists. When squalls produce whiteout conditions, drivers cannot see others around them, which often leads to dozens of cars crashing into each other, resulting in injuries, death, and vehicle damages.

