



NEWS RELEASE

Department of Public Safety

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State Officials Urge Public to Prepare Now for Major Storm

PIERRE, S.D. – South Dakota state government officials urge citizens to make preparations now, which includes adjusting travel plans, for a late-winter storm this week that will cover most of the state with several inches of snow, high winds and freezing rain.

The latest National Weather Service forecast calls for the heaviest snow to begin falling in western and central South Dakota Wednesday morning. At the same time, portions of eastern and south central South Dakota will see freezing rain or heavy rain, which could result in downed power lines and flooding. Overnight Wednesday into Thursday, central South Dakota can expect winds as high as 70 miles per hour, which will bring blowing and drifting snow and reduced visibility. Snow is expected throughout most of South Dakota by Thursday before finally ending that afternoon and evening. Up to two feet of snow could fall in some areas.

Those staying at home are encouraged to make sure they have enough supplies on hand, including needed medication. Citizens also are urged to check on elderly neighbors, pets and livestock.

Wednesday and Thursday are expected to be heavy traffic days with many people attending state high school basketball tournaments starting Thursday in Aberdeen, Rapid City and Sioux Falls. State Department of Public Safety Secretary Craig Price says people should start to adjust their travel plans now.

“There are still a lot of questions about the timing and direction of this storm, but for now we encourage people going anywhere in western South Dakota to be at their place of destination by Tuesday night,” he says. “For those headed elsewhere in South Dakota, you should get to your destination by sometime Wednesday afternoon. The current forecast indicates travel will likely be very difficult by Thursday morning.”

Department of Transportation Operations Director Greg Fuller says crews are preparing now to keep highways open as much as possible.

“Motorists need to keep updated with latest weather and road conditions,” he says. “This appears to be a fast-moving storm that could quickly impact roads and driving conditions.”

Drivers are reminded to check [safetravelusa.com/sd](https://www.safetravelusa.com/sd) or call 5-1-1 before they begin their trip. Motorists also are urged to take the following steps:

- Check [safetravelusa.com/sd](https://www.safetravelusa.com/sd) or call 5-1-1 to check road conditions.
- Wear your seatbelt
- Travel during the day
- Drive with your headlights on (not daytime running lights) so you can be seen by other motorists from the front and rear
- Don't use cruise control on icy or snow-covered roads
- Use highly traveled roads and highways
- Keep family and friends informed of your travel schedule and route
- Keep a winter weather survival kit in your car. The kit should include blankets, warm clothing, water, energy bars, a flashlight, a distress flag, a shovel and matches
- Travel with a charged cell phone, **but don't rely on it to get you out of a bad situation**
 - Change travel plans as weather conditions warrant

If you do get stranded:

- Stay in your vehicle
- Run the engine and heater about 10 minutes an hour to stay warm
- When the engine is running, open a window slightly to prevent carbon monoxide poisoning. Periodically clearing snow from the exhaust pipe will also help prevent carbon monoxide buildup
- When it's dark outside, turn on the interior light so rescuers can see you
- Put up a distress flag, or spread a large colored cloth on the ground to attract attention from rescuers