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(S.D.)-Spring Storm Creates Difficult Driving Conditions



By: Roxie Graham-Marski Posted at: 04/09/2013 01:08 PM

PIERRE, S.D. – Officials are cautioning travelers as a spring storm makes its way through the state, bring periods of freezing rain, heavy snowfall, and extremely high winds across much of South Dakota through Wednesday morning.

The National Weather Service has said the western part of the state is experiencing freezing rain, heavy snowfall, and winds from 25 to 40 mph, with higher gusts. Other areas of the state might see lesser accumulations and strong winds.

This weather combination creates difficult driving conditions with snow-packed and slippery roadways, near-zero visibility at times, and heavy drifting, especially during the overnight hours.

"Spring storms are not unusual, but they can be very dangerous," said Greg Fuller, director of operations for the Department of Transportation. "This storm has the potential to bring heavy, wet snowfall and strong winds to much of South Dakota. Travel will be very difficult at times."

Fuller encourages motorists to get to their destinations before dark or delay their travel. Those who must travel should visit www.safetravelusa.com/sd or call 511 to check the latest road conditions and travel advisories before venturing out.

Travelers are reminded that SDDOT crews will plow until early evening hours as conditions allow. After that, winter maintenance will be suspended and will resume about 5 a.m. in morning, weather permitting.

People who must travel in affected areas are advised to slow down and drive with extreme caution. The departments of Transportation and Public Safety recommend travelers also take the following steps.

- § ..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.
- § ..Use highly traveled roads and highways.
- § ..Keep family and friends informed of your travel schedule and route.
- § ..Call 511 or visit safetravelusa.com for road conditions.

- § --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.

--South Dakota Department of Transportation