

PUBLIC INFORMATION STATEMENT
NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE BUFFALO, NY
800 AM EDT WED OCT 29 2008

...THIS WEEK IS WINTER WEATHER AWARENESS WEEK IN NEW YORK...

GOVERNOR DAVID PATERSON HAS PROCLAIMED THE WEEK OF OCTOBER 26TH TO NOVEMBER 1ST AS WINTER WEATHER AWARENESS WEEK IN THE EMPIRE STATE. THE NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE JOINS WITH THE GOVERNOR AND NEW YORK STATE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY IN PROMOTING WINTER WEATHER SAFETY TO ALL NEW YORKERS.

ICE STORMS ARE ONE OF WINTERS MOST DANGEROUS HAZARDS. HEAVY ACCUMULATIONS OF ICE CAN BRING DOWN TREES AND POWER LINES AS WELL AS TOPPLE UTILITY POLES AND COMMUNICATIONS TOWERS. THIS CAN DISRUPT POWER AND COMMUNICATIONS FOR DAYS OR EVEN WEEKS WHILE CREWS REPAIR EXTENSIVE DAMAGE. EVEN SMALL ACCUMULATIONS OF ICE CAN BE EXTREMELY DANGEROUS TO MOTORISTS AND PEDESTRIANS. BRIDGES AND OVERPASSES ARE PARTICULARLY DANGEROUS BECAUSE THEY FREEZE BEFORE OTHER SURFACES.

FREEZING RAIN IS THE RESULT OF A TEMPERATURE INVERSION WHICH FORMS IN THE ATMOSPHERE. RAIN FALLS IN THE WARMER AIR WELL ABOVE THE SURFACE. HOWEVER IF TEMPERATURES ARE BELOW FREEZING AT THE SURFACE, THE RAIN FREEZES ON IMPACT WITH OBJECTS AND CREATES A COATING OF ICE. A THICK LAYER OF ICE ADDS TREMENDOUS WEIGHT TO OBJECTS SUCH AS TREES AND POWER LINES CAUSING THEM TO BREAK UNDER THE STRESS. EVEN THIN LAYERS COATING ROAD SURFACES ARE HAZARDOUS SINCE THEY ARE VERY SLIPPERY.

UNFORTUNATELY, NEW YORK EXPERIENCES SOME OF THE HIGHEST FREQUENCIES OF FREEZING RAIN NATIONWIDE. WARM AIR BLOWING FROM THE SOUTH IS FREQUENTLY DEFLECTED ALOFT THE MOUNTAINS, TRAPPING THE COLD AIR IN THE VALLEYS.

A COUPLE OF MAJOR ICE STORMS OVER THE PAST DECADE ALSO RANK AS AMONG THE WORST IN HISTORY. A VERY DANGEROUS AND DESTRUCTIVE ICE STORM STRUCK THE NORTH COUNTRY FROM JANUARY 8 THROUGH 11 IN 1998 WHERE ICE UP TO 4 INCHES THICK BROUGHT DOWN TREES AND POWER LINES. HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE WERE WITHOUT POWER FOR PERIODS THAT EXCEEDED A WEEK IN SOME INSTANCES. IN JEFFERSON COUNTY ALONE, POWER OUTAGES AFFECTED OVER 75 PERCENT OF THE CUSTOMERS. THE DAIRY INDUSTRY WAS DEVASTATED AS THE LOSS OF POWER PREVENTED THE MILKING OF COWS.

IN 1991, AN ICE STORM STRUCK WESTERN AND NORTHERN NEW YORK FROM JAMESTOWN TO WATERTOWN. IN ALL, 20 COUNTIES WERE AFFECTED, 13 OF THEM UNDER A FEDERAL DISASTER DECLARATION. ROCHESTER WAS ESPECIALLY HARD HIT WITH SCHOOLS AND MANY BUSINESSES CLOSED FOR A WEEK. ONCE AGAIN, THICK ICE ACCUMULATIONS FROM FREEZING RAIN KNOCKED OUT POWER. IN ALL, ALMOST 325,000 CUSTOMERS WERE WITHOUT POWER. IT WAS THE COSTLIEST STORM EVER TO STRIKE NEW YORK STATE, EXCEEDING THE DESTRUCTION CAUSED BY TROPICAL STORM AGNES.

AS YOU CAN SEE, ALL NEW YORKERS MUST BE PREPARED FOR THE WORST WINTER HAS TO OFFER. PREPARATION IS THE KEY TO A SAFE COLD WEATHER SEASON. YOUR NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE HAS MANY TIPS TO HELP RESIDENTS BE READY IF SEVERE WINTER WEATHER STRIKES. YOU CAN FIND THIS INFORMATION BY VISITING OUR WEBSITE AT WWW.WEATHER.GOV/BUF.