

Ready PA *monthly*

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A Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA) digital newsletter

Ready PA Monthly - November 2024



Winter Weather in Pennsylvania: Snow Squalls & Staying Safe

Snow Squall Awareness Week - November 11-15, 2024

What comes to mind when you think of winter hazards? Maybe big snowstorms burying the streets, icy layers covering trees and roads, or flooding from heavy rains on melting snow. Pennsylvania experiences all of these and more, including a unique and surprising winter hazard: snow squalls!

What's a Snow Squall?

Snow squalls are quick, intense bursts of heavy snow (up to 2 inches in 30 minutes!) combined with strong winds over 30 mph. This combination creates “whiteout” conditions where visibility drops below a quarter mile, and everything seems to vanish in a haze of snow. Snow squalls can appear suddenly, even on partly cloudy days, catching drivers off guard and causing major accidents.

Why Are Snow Squalls So Dangerous?

The sneaky danger of a snow squall lies in the icy roads it leaves behind. Here's why: because squalls often hit on otherwise warmer days, the roads start out warm enough to melt the first snowflakes. But as temperatures quickly drop, that melted snow turns to ice, creating slick and hazardous conditions that can cause accidents.

How Does the NWS Spot Snow Squalls?

The National Weather Service (NWS) monitors and predicts snow squalls using a mix of weather models, radar, and satellite images, plus data from weather stations across Pennsylvania, including the [Keystone Mesonet](#). They alert PennDOT, emergency officials, and the public as soon as conditions seem right for squalls, often using social media, weather statements, and radar updates. Since 2018, they've also issued Snow Squall Warnings—short, urgent warnings that activate emergency alerts on smartphones, so drivers know right away to stay safe.

Staying Safe in a Snow Squall!

If you're driving and a Snow Squall Warning pops up:

- Try to exit the highway at the next safe spot.
- If caught in a squall, don't brake suddenly—turn on headlights and hazard lights, stay in your lane, and keep a safe distance from other cars.

Get Ready & Stay Aware This Winter!

Check the latest forecasts at [weather.gov](#) or the NWS on social media before heading out. If a Snow Squall Warning is issued, delay your drive if you can. Also, stay updated with the 511 PA App or at [511pa.com](#) for live road conditions, speeds, and traffic cameras. Snow squalls can be sudden, but with a few precautions, you'll be ready to handle them safely!

Stay Informed This Winter!

AlertPA Notifications by CodeRED

With AlertPA, you'll receive instant alerts about emergencies, severe weather, health updates, and more from state and federal agencies. If your location is in the path of severe weather, the National Weather Service will trigger a CodeRED Weather Warning through AlertPA to notify you immediately.

511PA Personalized Travel Alert

Winter is on its way! Did you know you can set up your own custom travel alerts with 511PA? Choose where, when, and for which roadways you want alerts:



- Set alerts for your daily commute or just weekdays if you prefer.
- Receive notifications about traffic delays, weather conditions, traffic speeds, and view live images from over 1,000 traffic cameras.
- Get up-to-date conditions on more than 40,000 miles of roadways, including winter conditions on 2,900 miles.

How to Access 511PA

511PA is free and available 24/7. Access it:

- Online at 511PA.com
- Through the 511PA app on iPhone or Android
- By calling 5-1-1 or checking updates on [X](#)

Stay prepared and sign up for both [AlertPA](#) and [511PA](#) to stay safe and informed all season!

Get Support for Heating Costs This Winter

The Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) is here to help Pennsylvanians stay warm this winter. The 2024-2025 LIHEAP season offers financial assistance to qualifying households to help cover heating costs during the cold months.

What LIHEAP Offers

LIHEAP provides cash grants to assist with heating bills and crisis grants for emergency situations where you're in immediate danger of losing your heat.

- **Cash Grants:** These grants help with your heating bills and are sent directly to your energy provider. They range from \$300 to \$1,000 based on income and household size.
- **Crisis Grants:** If you're facing an energy emergency, such as a furnace breakdown or having your heat turned off, crisis grants can provide additional funds.

Who Can Qualify?

Eligibility for LIHEAP is based on income and household size. You do not need to repay these grants.

How to Apply

Applying for LIHEAP is easy:

- Online: Visit www.compass.state.pa.us
- In-Person: Go to your local County Assistance Office
- By Phone: Call the LIHEAP hotline at 1-866-857-7095

Season Dates

The LIHEAP season runs from **November 1, 2024, to April 15, 2025**. However, funding is limited, so apply early to ensure you receive assistance if you qualify.

Stay warm and safe this winter! Apply for LIHEAP today to keep your household comfortable through the colder months. For more information, visit [here](#).



[NOVEMBER TIP SHEET: SNOW SQUALL SAFETY](#)

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