

Write one important fact from each paragraph in this space.

Science Shorts -7

Blizzard!

A blizzard is more than just a bad snowstorm. It's a powerful snowstorm with strong cold winds. Blizzards usually come after a spell of warm winter weather. A mass of cold air moves down from the Arctic Circle. This cold, heavy air drops down while the warmer, moist air rises. This forms a cold front. The result is a heavy snowfall whipped by bitter north winds.

The National Weather Service of the United States defines a blizzard as a snowstorm with winds of 35 miles per hour (56kph). The blowing snow makes it hard to see even a foot or two ahead. During a really severe blizzard, winds gust at over 45 miles per hour (72kph). The visibility is zero. The temperatures can drop to 10°F (-12°C).

A huge blizzard in March 1888 covered the eastern U.S., choking New York City. It took more than a week to dig the city out. During that time many people froze to death inside their homes. Blizzards caused trouble for the settlers in the West, too. The dangerous weather came without much warning. People had to rush to get themselves and their animals indoors. Otherwise they would die.

It was risky to be out in a storm, yet someone had to feed the animals. Sometimes people were found frozen just a few feet away from their house or barn. They just couldn't see well enough to find shelter. So people tacked one end of a rope to their barn. They nailed the other end of the rope to their house. They went back and forth holding the rope. This kept them from getting lost in the blinding snow.

Blizzards happen in the U.S. Northern Plains states, in eastern and central Canada and in parts of Russia. The high winds can blow snow into huge drifts 15 feet (5m) high. These snowdrifts often stop all transportation. Schools and businesses close down for days until all of the snow gets cleared away. During that time, if a person needs to get to hospital, an ambulance cannot come help. Instead the person must go in a snowplow!

One hundred five years to the day (March 12) after the Great Blizzard of 1888, a massive blizzard, nicknamed the Storm of the Century, hit the U.S in 1993. It dropped snow over 26 states and reached as far north as Canada and as far south as Mexico. In many southern U.S. areas, such as parts of Alabama, more snow fell in this storm than ever fell in an entire winter. Highways and airports were closed across the U.S. When the Storm of the Century was over, 270 people died and 48 were reported missing at sea.

1. How does a blizzard differ from a regular snowstorm?
 - a. A blizzard has high winds that blow lots of snow around.
 - b. A blizzard has lots of snow but no wind.
 - c. A blizzard has high winds but no snow.
 - d. No one knows when a blizzard is coming.

2. What would happen last?
 - a. The ambulance sent a snowplow to help Ms. Ramirez.
 - b. Ms. Ramirez called an ambulance.
 - c. There was a blizzard
 - d. Ms. Ramirez had a medical emergency

3. Why does transportation stop during a blizzard?
 - a. It's too cold for any engine to run.
 - b. Blizzards always happen during the night.
 - c. Winds blow the vehicles right off the road.
 - d. People can't see well enough to drive or fly.

4. Visibility means
 - a. the ability to smell
 - b. the ability to see
 - c. the ability to hear
 - d. the ability to feel

5. Picture yourself watching the weather on TV. The forecaster says that a blizzard will hit your area tonight. You can expect that tomorrow you will most likely
 - a. have a warm day
 - b. go to school
 - c. go to the grocery store for food.
 - d. stay at home

6. Make 3 observations from the picture.

