

Dust Storms and Haboobs

Dust storms and Haboobs can occur anywhere in the United States but are most common in the Southwest. Haboobs occur as a result of thunderstorm outflow winds. Strong thunderstorm winds can start a dust storm that can drastically reduce visibility. Your NWS Forecast Office will issue a Dust Storm Warning if one is happening in your area.

Motorists Beware!

A dust storm usually arrives suddenly in the form of an advancing wall of dust and debris which may be miles long and several thousand feet high. They strike with little warning, making driving conditions hazardous. Blinding, choking dust can quickly reduce visibility, causing accidents that may involve chain collisions, creating massive pileups. Dust storms usually last only a few minutes, but the actions a motorist takes during the storm may be the most important of his or her life.

Dust Storm Safety Tips

If dense dust is observed blowing across or approaching a roadway, pull your vehicle off the pavement as far as possible, stop, turn off lights, set the emergency brake, take your foot off of the brake pedal to be sure the tail lights are not illuminated.

Don't enter the dust storm area if you can avoid it.

If you can't pull off the roadway, proceed at a speed suitable for visibility, turn on lights and sound horn occasionally. Use the painted center line to help guide you. Look for a safe place to pull off the roadway.

Never stop on the traveled portion of the roadway.

Lights Out!

In the past, motorists driving in dust storms have pulled off the roadway, leaving lights on. Vehicles approaching from the rear and using the advance car's lights as a guide have inadvertently left the roadway and in some instances collided with the parked vehicle. Make sure all of your lights are off when you park off the roadway.