

'Historic' Christmas snowfall is likely

Weather service advises holiday travelers to monitor forecast

By Paul Alongi

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Holiday revelers hoping the Upstate will have its first white Christmas in 47 years saw their chances improve in the latest forecast with "an event of historic proportions" now possible, according to the National Weather Service in Greer.

Anywhere from one to several inches could fall, most likely north of a line extending from Hartwell, Ga., to Anderson to Laurens, according to the weather service.

"If this forecast works out, it could be an event that will be talked about for the rest of our lives," a meteorologist wrote.

The Upstate has had three white Christmases since 1884, which is as far

back as the historical record goes.

Crews from the state Department of Transportation began coating roads with salt brine on Wednesday and will continue today.

They started early because it could be a big storm and the DOT hoped to give employees Christmas Eve off because they could end up working Christmas, said district maintenance engineer Jason Allison.

With the fourth white Christmas possible on Saturday, the weather service has put out a hazardous weather outlook advising people with travel plans in the Upstate and western North Carolina to monitor the forecast.

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"In the current forecast we're expecting snow to become likely as Christmas Day wears on," said Chris Horne, meteorologist with the National Weather Service at the Greenville-Spartanburg Airport.

"We have just very small probabilities for light snow or flurries Christmas morning, and then it increases during the day."

Horne said it's possible people will see the onset of light snow or flurries "even

before dawn" but said "as far as anything real notable it may hold off until after noon."

He said the snow might linger longer into Christmas night, too.

"We do have chances lingering into Sunday, but it really dwindles to very minimal as Sunday morning wears on," Horne said.

Horne said there is about a 70 percent probability for snow for the daytime hours Christmas Day for the Upstate.

Forecasting models favored mostly snow, although areas to the south of Hartwell-Anderson-Laurens line could get rain, according to the weather

service.

The last time the Upstate had at least an inch of snow on the ground on Christmas was in 1963 when it was left over from a storm two days earlier. Two other white Christmases go back to 1909 and 1947, according to the weather service.

An inch of snow fell on Christmas in 1962 but doesn't count because it melted as it hit the ground, according to the weather service.

■ Staff writer Paul Alongi can be reached at 864-298-4746. Staff writer Julia Howla contributed to this report.