

Shocking experiences

Drawbacks of the dry season

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In my part of the country, the winter season is a pretty dry season.

We see some pretty cold temperatures in the winter, but like we say, "it's a dry cold." We figure 20 below zero on the prairie is more comfortable than 20 above along the ocean.

It's the equivalent of Arizona's summer bragging rights about their "dry heat." Because, as we all know, "it's not so much the heat as it is the humidity." It's what makes 100 degrees in Arizona a lot more tolerable than 100 degrees in Florida.

Even with the comfort advantages of an arid atmosphere, there're times when a little humidity would be welcome.

Desert drawbacks

Dry winter air makes for a lot of static cling. Ladies' dresses and men's slacks get a little more form fitting in the static season.

Kids can stick balloons to themselves without even rubbing them on their hair first. If you aren't careful, you'll find yourself toting around that odd sock or dryer sheet stuck to your back side.

In the dry season, "nose bleed section" doesn't mean the top row of seats in the stadium. It can be just about anywhere. Bloody noses surely aren't caused by alpine elevation here on the Dakota plains, it's just inland winter atmosphere.

The carpet on the floorboards of the cars makes for some nice static electric charge when matched up with dry air, leather shoe soles and a little friction. It can make a person downright jumpy.

I've had cars where I'm afraid to even touch the door after I get out. Like Pavlov's dog, I can make the connection between stimulus and response. After being stimulated by static shock the first couple hundred times, I figured out it was easier to shut the door with an insulated elbow or a swing of the hip.

I've been in motel rooms in the winter that would exceed the Sahara Desert for aridity. I remember walking across the carpet in one Sahara-dry motel room and getting such a shock on the metal door knob that I quit answering the knock at the door. It cost me a pizza delivery, but I was too gun shy to grab iron.

In some places, I like to bring in a humidifier and let the machine duke it out with the electric heater. If you can keep pumping the water to the humidifier, it will get ahead if the motor doesn't burn out.

Electrical conversion

A couple weeks ago, I had one of my more interesting experiences with static electricity.

I was asked to help serve the sacraments at my church on Sunday. When it came time for holy communion, I took my place behind the minister with the tray of wine. It's a solemn ceremony and I'm honored to be part of the distribution.

The first altar full went fine, but after walking back across the carpet to serve the next group, the parishioners got a little more than they bargained for.

As I handed them the small glass of wine, I said, "Blood of Christ, shed for you," then Zzzzztttt! They got a full charge of static electricity when our fingertips touched around the little plastic cup. Once I thought I saw a blue spark jump between us.

I didn't drop any of them to the ground, but I think they went back to their pew with a little more respect for the power of the spirit. Yes, God was with us.

