

## National Weather Service Storm Data and Unusual Weather Phenomena



Time Path Path Number of Estimated December 1996
Local/ Length Width Persons Damage
Location Date Standard (Miles) (Yards) Killed Injured Property Crops Character of Storm

## NORTH DAKOTA, Central and West

NDZ001>005-009>013-017>023-025-031>037-040>048-050>051 Divide - Burke - Renville - Bottineau - Rolette - Williams - Mountrail - Ward - Mchenry - Pierce - Mckenzie - Dunn - Mercer - Oliver - Mclean - Sheridan - Wells - Foster - Golden Valley - Billings - Stark - Morton - Burleigh - Kidder - Stutsman - Slope - Hettinger - Grant - Bowman - Adams - Sioux - Emmons - Logan - La Moure - Mcintosh - Dickey

16 0400CST 0 0 Blizzard

A strong low pressure center moved southeast out of canada into the northern plains bringing with it blizzard conditions. The blizzard lasted for 3 days in North Dakota. The blizzard began in the western part of the state the morning of Monday, December 16 and didn't exit the eastern part of the state until the evening of Wednesday, December 18th. This was the first 3 day blizzard since the winter of 1980-81. Snowfall amounts varied from around 2 inches in the Dickinson area...3-4 inches in Williston and Bismarck to 6-8 inches in the Jamestown area. The light snow combined with north winds gusting to 50 mph to produce massive blowing and drifting of snow. Temperatures also plummeted down to 20 below creating wind chills from 40 to 60 below. Visibilities were so poor that the ND Highway dept. pulled the plows off roads the evening of the 16th and didn't allow them to return to the roads until the afternoon of the 18th. Snow drifts as high as 10 feet were common. All of I-29 in North Dakota and I-94 from Bismarck to Fargo were closed, stranding hundreds of travelers. 3 Greyhound buses carrying an estimated 70 passengers got stranded at Steele. With all the trucks that were also stranded, the only hotel in town was putting 4-5 people per room. There were also numerous reports of people stranded in their vehicles after going in the ditch or getting stuck in a snow drift. Luckily, all the people followed winter safety rules and survived. Many school districts cancelled school Monday through Wednesday. With the closed roads, mail was delayed up to 3 days in many communities. The strong winds made the drifted snow so hard that many plows just rode up and over the drift instead of knocking it down. There are also reports of snow plow blades being broken off by the hard compacted snow. The Game and Fish dept. estimates that 12-16 thousand pheasants may have died during the blizzard from cold, lack of food, or suffication. Power lines were also knocked down in parts of southwestern North Dakota, leaving people with electricity for up to 31 hours. Milk producers in Emmons Co. had to dump their milk Monday and Tuesday since no trucks were able to get to them. It is unknown how much or what the value of the milk was. Many ranchers faced the possibility of losing part of their cattle herd due to the cold and being unable to get food to them.

NDZ009 Williams

24 0200CST 1 0 Extreme Cold

A 41 yr. old female died of exposure in Williston. Her body was found only a few feet from the front door of her house. It is believed that she died sometime during the early morning hours of Tuesday, December 24. The morning low that morning in Williston was 19 below. F41OU

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25 0600CST 0 0 0 Extreme Cold

The blizzard of the 16th-18th left in its wake very cold air. Williston set a new state record low of 32 below the morning of the 25th, and Bismarck set a new record low high temperature for the date, with the mercury struggling to 10 below for a high. Lows across the state that morning varied from 20 to 30 below with highs from 10 to 20 below.