



National Weather Service

Storm Data and Unusual Weather Phenomena



January 1997

Location	Date	Time Local/ Standard	Path Length (Miles)	Path Width (Yards)	Number of Persons Killed	Injured	Estimated Damage Property	Crops	Character of Storm
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NORTH DAKOTA, Central and West

NDZ017>023-025-031>037-040>048-050>051 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

04	0600CST	0	10	6.5M			Blizzard
05	1800CST						

The first blizzard of 1997 hit east-central North Dakota on the morning of the 4th. The blizzard was preceded by freezing rain that lasted most of the day before switching over to snow. The snow became so heavy that the highway department pulled the plows off of the roads the evening of the 4th and all day on the 5th. It was during the evening of the 4th that the northwest winds began to blow. Winds of 25 to 35 mph were common. Some of the higher snow amounts include 14 inches of snow at Ellendale (Dickey Co) and Linton(Emmons Co), 11 inches at Hague(Emmons Co) and 18 inches of snow at Oakes(Dickey Co). The roof collapsed at the Lull plant in Oakes from the weight of the snow. Although the snow was not as heavy in the western part of North Dakota, the freezing rain made travel very hazardous. A Greyhound bus slid into the ditch on I-94 near New Salem. This would turn out to be the first of 4 major snow events that would hit western and central North Dakota during January. Injuries and dollar damage amounts estimated.

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

04	0600CST	0	0			Blizzard Summary
22	1700CST					

The economic impact these 4 blizzards had on North Dakota were staggering. On the agricultural side alone, it is estimated that over 6 million was lost for buildings and machinery, 4.7 million in livestock deaths, 21.7 million for extra feed consumption, and \$50,000 worth of dumped milk when transporters couldn't get to the farms. In addition, its estimated that \$600,000 was spent by the Game and Fish Dept. to help farmers battle the deer that was eating their hay reserves. Also, its estimated thta the National Guard spent \$800,000 in January to help with snow removal. Many communities spent up to 10 times their snow removal budget just in January alone, with the state itself spending an estimated additional \$125,000 in salaries and operating expenses. Damage totals are still coming in as of this writing. The January of 1997 will be long remembered in the minds of many North Dakotans

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

09	0400CST	2	45	55.1M		Blizzard
11	1800CST					

The second blizzard in less than 1 week brought North Dakota to a virtual standstill. This blizzard didn't bring as much snow as the first storm, but the winds gusted from the northwest as high at 40 mph and they lasted for 3 days. Snowfall amounts from this storm varied from 1-2 inches in the southwest to 2-4 inches in the central. But the strong winds combined with this snow as well as the snow from the blizzard a few days earlier created widespread whiteout conditions that lasted for 3 days. There were numerous communities that halted mail delivery and cancelled school. In Emmons Co. every road was blocked by drifts, some as high as 18 feet. In McLean Co. there was a drift at the intersection of highways 83 and 37 that was 12 feet high and 150 yards long. It took snow plow operators working from both directions 10 hours to open. The Standing Rock Indian Reservation had severe hardship with snow drifts taller than buses blocking all the entrance roads. Most of the people on the reservation ran out of propane to heat their homes, and food shortages were widespread. Again, almost every major road in North Dakota was closed and plows pulled off. In Foster Co., the county road department had to abandon some roads because they no longer had to money or equipment to open them back up. When plows were running, the operators were putting in 12-14 hours days. The drifts were so big that 2 coal trains got stranded in the blizzard and an Amtrack train was stranded in Stanley. Many buildings were beginning to fail from the weight of the snow of this storm and the previous one. There were reports of people getting stranded in vehicles for up to 40 hours. Those that stayed with the vehicle survived, but those that didn't either perished or suffered 2nd and 3rd degree burns over 70-90 percent of their body. A 41 year old Carrington man died from exposure when he tried to walk from his stranded car to his parents farm house 1/2 mile away. A 66 yr. old Dunseith man died of hypothermia when he fell off of his porch when the railing gave way and couldn't get back up. As the storm was winding down on the 11th and 12th, bitter cold air moved in, and with the strong northwest winds still blowing, wind chills plummeted to 85-90 below with actual air temperatures 20-30 below. In Elgin(Grant Co), the water tower froze and broke open due to the cold temperatures. With the amount of suffering and hardship going on, Gov. Schafer of North Dakota



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NORTH DAKOTA, Central and West

declared the state a disaster area. This was followed on the 12th with President Clinton approving the 1st ever request to declare a major statewide disaster. The national guard was called in to help with snow removal as many communities had already spent their snow removal money before this storm. Injuries and dollar damage amounts estimated. M66PH, M41OU

**NDZ025-036>037-
047>048-050>051**

Foster - Kidder - Stutsman - Logan - La Moure - McIntosh - Dickey

15	0600CST			2	10	6.3M			Blizzard
16	1800CST								

The 3rd blizzard to hit North Dakota in less than 3 weeks affected mainly the east-central and eastern part of the state. Again, like the previous blizzard, the winds was the major weather factor. Wind gusts at times were over 50 mph. This created widespread blowing and drifting snow. All major roads in the area were closed again for the 3rd time this year. In Logan Co. the machine shed that is used by the Logan Co. Historical Society to store antiques was damaged by the roof falling in. With the severity of the blowing and drifting snow, roads that were just opened from the last storm were once again blown shut. This led to the death of a 71 yr. old Fredonia(Logan Co.) man. He suffered a heart attack at his farm, and was able to call 911 for help. However, the ambulance couldn't get to him because of the blocked roads. A 57 yr old man from Napoleon(Logan Co.) also suffered a heart attack on his farm and passed away before assistance could get to him. Injuries and dollar damage amounts estimated. M71PH, M57PH

**NDZ023-025-036>037-
047>048-050>051**

Wells - Foster - Kidder - Stutsman - Logan - La Moure - McIntosh - Dickey

21	2300CST			0	10	6.3M	0		Blizzard
22	1700CST								

The last in a string of 4 blizzards to hit North Dakota struck in the morning of the 22nd. Snow amounts with this storm ranged from 2-4 inches, but northwest winds gusted to near 45 mph. Again, east-central and eastern North Dakota were hardest hit. I-29 in North Dakota and I-94 from Bismarck to Fargo were closed again. Injuries and damage amounts estimated