

## **Winter is Here!**

### **Are you Winter Weather Ready?**

Although NOAA and the National Weather Service define winter as the months of December, January and February, winter in eastern New York and western New England often runs from November through April, especially in the higher terrain. November and early December is known as the “Brown Season” as the vegetation has gone into the dormant stage. By mid-December, the threat of heavy lake effect snow and heavy snow from powerful nor’easters increases. The threat of significant ice storms also increases across the region with significant ice storms recorded from November through April. Periods of extreme cold and windy conditions and the threat of winter storms continue through the winter into spring. The following is a list of notable winter storms with some links for reference. This is not meant to be an all-inclusive list, but a list to give an idea of what weather conditions to be prepared for in the winter so you can be winter weather ready.

#### **Notable Ice Storms:**

*December 11-12, 2008*

Up to an inch of ice accretion in the Albany Forecast Area. Widespread power outages from downed trees and wires in New York, Vermont, Massachusetts and Connecticut. In the Albany Forecast Area, over 200,000 customers lost power with some residents without power for 5 to 7 days. Lots of basement flooding from sump pump backup-battery failure during prolonged power outages. Storm produced moderate river flooding from heavy rain and power outages from glaze breaking trees and wires *at the same time* in Litchfield County, CT. Northwest part of Albany Forecast Area saw mainly snow and sleet.

*December 4-5, 1964*

Freezing rain caused ice accumulations of up to 1.5 inches and crippled east central New York and the Berkshires of western Massachusetts. Some residents were without power for two weeks and schools had to be shut down for a week. Temporary shelters were opened in Massachusetts and New York. Thawing of ice on December 11 caused additional power outages as wires snapped from sudden release of weight. Icing conditions extended from Buffalo to Boston. Worst glazing since December 29-30, 1942. During storm, precipitation was mostly snow in southern Vermont (6-10” reported) and plain rain in northwest Connecticut.

#### **Notable Winter Floods:**

*January 19-22, 1996*

The Northeast Floods of January 1996 were the result of a very rapid snowmelt punctuated by a short but intense rainfall. What made this event so unusual was the nature and the intensity of the snowmelt, combined with the intense rainfall for this time of year, over such a large geographical area. The flooding was compounded by ice movement and jamming in many of the rivers and streams. The floods

were described by some as a "flash flood" for main-stem rivers due to the unprecedented rates of rise recorded during this event.

<https://ny.water.usgs.gov/pubs/wri/wri974252/WRIR97-4252.pdf>

<http://www.nws.noaa.gov/oh/hrl/surveys/flood96/FL96cver.htm>

*December 31, 1948 - January 2, 1949*

Major flooding occurred in the Hudson, Housatonic and Connecticut River drainages as a slow moving storm brought heavy rain. Liquid equivalent precipitation (mostly rain) was 5-12 inches across these river basins. Rainfall was heaviest December 29 into December 31. Snowmelt and ground frost were limited due to unseasonably warm temperatures during the late fall and early winter. Precipitation changed to snow at the tail end of the storm. Major flooding along the Hudson River at Albany.

<https://pubs.usgs.gov/circ/1952/0155/report.pdf>

## **Major Snow Storms:**

*Double-Barrel Nor'easters (December 25-26, 2002 & January 3-4, 2003)*

Two major snowstorms in a short period of time, one on Christmas Day, pummeled the area. The first was the biggest snowstorm since the "Superstorm" of 1993. 21" of snow reported at Albany with 6-16" in western New England and considerable blowing and drifting. The New York State Thruway was closed between the cities of Catskill and Syracuse. Many stranded in the Albany International Airport on Christmas Night as flights were cancelled. The second storm produced 20.8 inches of snow at Albany. It was the first time since 1887-88 that two storms of more than 20 inches were recorded at Albany during the same winter. The second storm combined with ice left on trees from an ice storm that occurred January 1-2 to bring down numerous trees and bring many power outages.

*January 15-16, 1983 Snowstorm*

Albany's 4<sup>th</sup> largest snowstorm. Albany reported 24.5 inches with amounts of almost 30" reported in Saratoga County, but less than a foot in the lower Hudson Valley. Up to 20" of snow in the Berkshires with 12-18" in southern Vermont and Northwest Connecticut. For Albany, this storm is the [greatest January snowfall on record](#) and one of the greatest snow storms. The heavy, wet snow brought travel to a standstill across many locations, and many injuries were reported due to auto accidents.

*February 14, 2007 Snowstorm*

Low pressure rapidly intensified as it passed just south of Long Island during Valentine's Day. Eastern New York and Western New England received 1 to 3 feet of snow with a few 40+ inch snowfall reports in the western Mohawk Valley and southern Adirondacks. Blowing and drifting occurred in the capital district making some roads impassable. Some motorists abandoned cars in the road. The storm is the fifth largest February snowstorm at Albany. Six inches or more of sleet was reported in northwest Connecticut and the southern Berkshires of Massachusetts.

## **Blizzards:**

### *January 13-14, 1964 Blizzard*

Widespread 10 to 15 inches of snow across Albany Forecast Area, with up to 30 inches in Catskills, and around 20 inches in southern Vermont and the Berkshires. 15.4 inches reported at Albany, NY. Winds gusting 50 to 60 MPH caused near zero visibility and snow drifts of 3 to 8 feet were reported. Route 9 in Vermont was closed from Bennington to Brattleboro. Winds downed trees and powerlines in Massachusetts causing power outages.

### *February 13-14, 2014 Snowstorm and Post Storm Blizzard*

The storm, which came in three waves, brought a widespread one to two feet of snow to the Albany Forecast Area. Most of the snowfall came in two bursts on February 13, one of 1-3" inch per hour snowfall rates at the beginning of the storm and another burst of 1 to 3" inches per hour near the end of the storm. The third wave was the 40 MPH winds that occurred at the tail end of the storm. People dug out their cars and cleared their driveways before they went to bed, only to wake up the next morning to see their cars and driveways buried again in snow drifts from the strong winds overnight.

### *February 2, 1976 Flash Freeze and Brief Blizzard*

At Albany, NY, the temperature fell from 41°F at midnight, to 1°F at 10:30 AM, with a 30 degree drop in the few hours before sunrise. Rain changed to snow and winds at Albany increased to 50 MPH with gusts to 67 MPH. Officially, only 3" of snow was measured at Albany, but visibility was near zero during morning commute. Roads were very icy and travel was seriously hampered. Two fatalities were reported; a man died from exposure to cold and another man was blown off a tug boat into the Hudson River and drowned. Winds downed trees and powerlines and caused some power outages and isolated structural damage. Brief blizzard conditions occurred across New York State with blizzard conditions reported in Buffalo and New York City. A long stretch of the NYS Thruway was closed. Strong northwest winds also caused a record low tide in New York Harbor.

## **Notable Winter Wind Storm:**

### *February 17, 2006*

A powerful low pressure system moved up the Saint Lawrence River Valley on February 17, 2006, drawing warm air up into Eastern New York and Western New England ahead of a cold front. Along the leading edge of the cold front, a squall line developed which brought a brief period of heavy rain and mixed strong storm winds down to the surface. Some thunder was reported with the squall line. These strong winds caused roofs to be blown off homes and business and widespread tree and powerline damage causing widespread power outages (over 150,000 customers were without power in the Albany Forecast Area). Measured wind gusts included 98 MPH at Saratoga County Airport, 71 MPH at Middleburg in Schoharie County, NY, 68 miles an hour at Belleayre Ski Resort in Ulster County, NY, 66 MPH at Bennington, VT, 63 MPH at the Schenectady County, NY Airport, 58 MPH at North Adams, MA., and a whopping 143 MPH at the top of Stratton Mountain, VT (elev 3885ft).

## **Extreme Cold:**

### *January 14-16, 2004*

An arctic front passed through the area on January 13. The warmest temperature on Jan 14 came just after midnight as temperatures continued to fall into the evening. Most locations woke to temperatures around zero or below only to see them fall during the day despite sunny conditions. Wind chills dropped below minus 25°F across most of the Albany Forecast Area, which led to the cancellation of most schools on January 14 due to the cold weather. Very strong, gusty winds led to considerable blowing and drifting of the few inches of light, fluffy snow that was on the ground. Frozen pipes in homes were common.

### *February 12-14, 2016*

Across the southern part of the Albany Forecast Area in New York and Connecticut, reported wind chills dropped to as low -23 to -29°F. Across the northern part of the area in New York and Vermont, reported wind chills dropped to -30 to -46°F. Coldest weather came on a weekend so schools were already closed. These cold temperatures and wind chills led to numerous reports of burst water pipes in schools and homes. This ended up being the only bitter cold in an otherwise mild winter.