

STORMBUSTER

A Newsletter for Emergency Managers & Storm Spotters

Winter Edition, 2003/2004



Fall 2003: More Wet Weather

by Evan L. Heller and Hugh W. Johnson

The 2003 Fall season in Albany was marked by a continuation of above normal precipitation and just slightly above normal temperatures. The average temperature was 51.2°. This was 1.5 degrees above the normal 49.7° for the season. Precipitation, all but a tiny fraction of it in the form of rain, totaled 13.24". This was 3.39 inches above the season's normal of 9.85". The season's scant 0.3" snowfall fell well short of the 5.2" normal.

September began with near normal temperatures, but from the 11th to the 28th, average daily readings were above normal each day. The high temperature for the month was 83°, on the 19th. The low was 39°, on the 30th, which was also the coldest day of the month, with an average daily temperature of 49.5°. This average value was reached with the assistance of the month's lowest maximum daily temperature reading, 60°. The warmest day was the 15th, with an average temperature of 75.0°, helped along by the highest minimum daily temperature reading for the month, 69°. The average temperature for the month was 63.0°, which is 2.4 degrees above normal. Precipitation for the month totaled 4.91", 1.60 inches above normal. The wettest day was the 23rd, when 1.56" fell. A trace or more of rain fell during 15 days of the month, 14 days on which it was measurable. A tenth of an inch or more fell on 10 days, and a half an inch or more fell on two days. The remnants of once powerful Hurricane Isabel brought gusty winds to the Mohawk Valley, which brought down trees and caused some spotty power outages during the afternoon of the 19th. No daily records were set during September.

October was also a month of above normal precipitation, but the average temperature for the month

was slightly below normal. All the days of the first week of the month had below normal temperatures, while almost all the days of the second and final weeks of the month were above normal for temperature. The warm day was the 9th, when the mercury soared to 78°, with an average temperature for the day of 63.0°. The region enjoyed a beautiful Columbus Day weekend with lots of sunshine and seasonably mild temperatures. Strong winds buffeted the area on the 15th. These winds were strongest in the Mohawk Valley, where a large semi was flipped on the New York Thruway, and winds were unofficially clocked near 60 mph in the town of Glen, Montgomery County. Power was interrupted to as many as 5,000 customers in the Mohawk Valley. Both the 24th and 25th had the lowest readings, with the mercury dipping to 27°. The coldest day was the 22nd, which averaged 37.0°, this being achieved with the lowest maximum daily temperature for any day of the month, 40°. This low maximum temperature established a new daily record for the date. The highest minimum daily temperature for October was 51° on both the 10th and 26th. Two daily precipitation records were set during October, when 1.60" fell on the 27th, followed by 1.59" two days later, on the 29th. The excessive rainfall resulted in minor flooding of the Housatonic and Schoharie basins. Routes 32 and 4 were washed out again, in the town of Halfmoon. Precipitation fell during 13 days of the month, on 10 of which it was measurable. A tenth of an inch or more fell on six days, a half inch or more on three days. A trace of snow was all that fell in Albany during October, on the 22nd and 23rd. For the 22nd, this tied a daily record. 0.2" of snow is the normal amount for the month. The average temperature for the month of 48.2° was 1.1 degrees below normal, while the 4.67" precipitation total was a little more

than twice the amount of the 3.23" October normal. Halloween was dry, and the mildest one in many years.

November's 3.66" total precipitation was much closer to the November normal than the previous month's totals were to those month's normals, but the average November temperature of 42.3° was a greater departure from the month's normal than the previous month's average temperatures were from those month's normals. The 8th to the 11th, and the 14th to the 17th were much colder than normal, with almost all of the remaining days warmer than normal. The first wintry mix of sleet and freezing rain sent cars skidding off the Adirondack Northway near Glens Falls. The warmest reading of the month occurred on the warmest day, the 1st, when the mercury topped out at 69°. The average temperature was 60.0°. In turn, the coldest reading, 20°, occurred on the coldest day, the 9th, which created a 29.5° average temperature. The lowest maximum daily temperature for November was 37°, on both the 14th and 15th. The highest minimum was 51°, on the 1st. The greatest daily precipitation amount, 1.25", occurred on the 19th. Precipitation occurred during 17 days of the month, 16 of them on which it was measurable. A tenth of an inch or more of precipitation occurred on eight days, a half inch or more on two days. Snowfall occurred on six days, two of them on which it was measurable. The first measurable snowfall, 0.2", occurred on the 25th. The 0.3" total for the month was 4.7 inches below normal for November. There were no new daily records set. However, two more significant wind events took place. The first one actually occurred over two days, the 13th and 14th, while the second high wind event took place on the 29th. In both cases, winds knocked down more trees and power lines, and caused minor property damage. Thanksgiving saw lots of sunshine and mild temperatures, but soaking rains pelted the area on Black Friday.

We Need Your Snowfall Reports

by John S. Quinlan and Vasil T. Koleci

As you are probably aware, the National Weather Service Office at Albany, NY issues numerous Public Information Messages during major Winter Storms to keep the public updated on the progression of the

storm. Until now, this has been a manual process requiring a lot of effort on the part of our staff. We would like to automate this process, and need your help.

For those of you who attended an Advanced SKYWARN Spotter Training Session and Winter Weather Workshop during Fall 2003, you were told that we were working on a Snowfall Data Entry Page. Unfortunately, due to the lack of quiet weather, this has not yet been created.

In the interim, we encourage you to use the Severe Weather Reporting Form to send in snowfall amounts, as well as water content of the snow. We would also appreciate any additional information you are able to provide, such as ice accumulation in the event of freezing rain.

The snowfall and water content values should be your total for the storm at the time of measurement. Please include your SKYWARN ID #, location, and the time you took your observation. Once you have entered your information and submitted it to us, an alarm message pops up on our computer console so we see your report. We are in the process of creating a computer program that will take your location, measurement and time of measurement, and automatically create a Public Information Message, which we will share with the world. Here is the direct link to the Severe Weather Report Form:

http://cstar.cestm.albany.edu:7775/Severe_WX/svrwx.htm

Remember to adhere to the National Weather Service Guidelines for Snowfall Measurement, especially the rule of no more than one snowfall measurement every six hours. This will ensure that everyone is measuring snowfall the same way, and allow for easy comparison of measurements between locations. The following is the link to the National Weather Service Snow Measurement Guidelines:

<http://www.wrds.uwyo.edu/wrds/wsc/reference/snowmeas.html>

Finally, do not forget about river ice, ice jams and flooding. Many of our major floods have occurred during winter thaws. If you observe ice jams, please send us any information you can regarding the location, time and nature of the ice jam. Here is the direct link to the River Ice Report that you may use to provide us ice jam information:

http://cstar.cestm.albany.edu:7775/Hydrology/hyd_forms/ICE_REPORT.htm

Once again, thank you for your reports.

NOAA's Winter Weather Update

December 18, 2003

The Winter Solstice begins on Monday, December 22, but if you ask many people living in the U.S. they might tell you winter is already here! With this year poised to being one of the wettest years on record in many states east of the Mississippi, people are asking, "What will the rest of the winter bring?"

In its final winter outlook update the NOAA Climate Prediction Center is predicting January, February and March will bring above average temperatures to much of the western U. S., as well as the central and northern Plains and much of Alaska, and below average temperatures to the Southeast from eastern Texas through the Carolinas, including much of Florida. Precipitation is likely to be above average in the Pacific Northwest and western and central Texas, and below average over the Southwest, Florida and the Lower Missouri Valley.

When considering the season as a whole, the remaining parts of the nation, including the Northeast, can expect equal chances of above-, below- or near-normal temperatures and precipitation. However, within the three-month period, variable and changing jet stream patterns are likely to continue bringing periods of storminess and swings of temperature extremes, as seen in the Northeast thus far.

NOAA forecasters expect the existing multi-year drought conditions in much of the interior West and parts of the Central Plains to continue, with the best chances for some improvement from the Northern Rockies westward to the Northern Cascades. In many areas, especially Arizona, New Mexico, and the western Great Plains, drought will likely persist and contribute to lingering, long-term water shortages. Persistent rains and saturated ground in parts of the Northeast and mid-Atlantic raise the concern for flooding potential.

Here's what you can expect:

The U.S. 2004 winter outlook update for January through March calls for warmer-than-average

conditions along the northern tier of the country from Washington eastward to Michigan, throughout the remainder of the West including Oregon, California, Nevada, Arizona and New Mexico, and in the intermountain states and central Great Plains to Iowa and Nebraska. Above average temperatures are also anticipated over most of Alaska. Cooler-than-average temperatures are expected across eastern Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, northern and central Florida, and the Carolinas. For other parts of the nation, January - March will have equal chances of above-, below-, or near-normal temperatures. Precipitation during January through March is likely to be above average in Oregon, Washington, and northern Idaho, as well as in much of western and central Texas. Drier-than-average conditions are favored in Arizona and nearby parts of each surrounding state, as well as in Nebraska, Kansas, eastern Iowa and northwest Missouri, and in Florida and southernmost parts of Georgia through Louisiana. The remainder of the country has equal chances of above-, below-, or near-normal precipitation during the period. "December 2003 shows us just how variable winter patterns can be," said Edward O'Lenic, meteorologist at the NOAA Climate Prediction Center. "It is important for people to pay close attention to local, daily weather forecasts so they can prepare for various precipitation types and temperature swings." NOAA will issue its spring outlook in March 2004.

WCM Words

by Dick Westergard

StormBuster is a newsletter primarily for our trained SkyWarn spotters. Reader articles, or suggested topics, are always welcome. Do you have any ideas? Drop me an e-mail or a snail mail note.

Here is the usual reminder of what we'd like you to call us about. First, during the Winter (November through April)

- 1) Snowfall of 4 inches or more in 24 hours.
 - 2) Any Freezing rain or drizzle.
 - 3) One inch or more of rain in 4 hours or less.
 - 4) Ice jams or Flooding, including bankfull or near bankfull streams.
 - 5) Damaging winds.
 - 6) Measured rainfall - 1.5 inches or more in 4 hours.
- During the convective season, (May through October) the reporting criteria are:
- 1) Tornadoes, water spouts, funnel clouds, wall clouds.
 - 2) Damaging Winds (58 mph or more).
 - 3) Any hail.
 - 4) Damaging lightning.
 - 5) Flooding, including bankfull or near bankfull streams.
 - 6) Measured rainfall - 1.5 inches or more in 4 hours.

Get your reports to the National Weather Service by the quickest means possible. Possible communications links include: Amateur Radio, the 800 number you were given at your training, and the "Severe Weather Report" form on the internet at: http://cstar.cestm.albany.edu:7775/Severe_WX

StormBuster is an electronic newsletter. If you, or any of your friends who are spotters, have any difficulties viewing this electronic version, please drop me an e-mail. If you do not have internet access at home, most local libraries have internet connections available to the public. If you or a friend do not currently get e-mail notification when StormBuster is posted, please drop me an e-mail. I'll be happy to add more names to my e-mail list of spotters.

Advanced SkyWarn sessions were held in eight locations around the area during October and November. Over a hundred spotters learned about snowfall measurements, ice jams, flooding and more. Watch for the Spring basic SkyWarn training schedule in our March issue of StormBuster. Or, after mid March you can check our web page at:

<http://www.erh.noaa.gov/aly/index.html> and click on the SkyWarn link to see a detailed list of training locations, and fill out a pre-registration form.

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