

Top 10 weather events from 2000-2009:

10. Summer 2003 record hot and dry spell: A record hot and dry spell occurred at Billings from late June through most of August. Billings did not receive measurable rain from June 26th through August 26th, a record 62 straight days. During this period, Billings also recorded 38 consecutive days with a low temperature of 60 degrees or warmer, and 40 consecutive days with a high temperature of 85 degrees or more. Both of these are records as well. Billings finally observed 0.03 inches of rain on August 27th. The dryness combined with a wet spring caused a very active fire season across the northern Rockies.



2003 Hobble Fire (Gazette)

9. October 2005 heavy snow event: A deep upper-level low pressure system over the central Rockies combined with a tap of Gulf of Mexico moisture and cold Canadian air to produce heavy wet snow from October 3rd through 5th. As this was an early fall event, many trees were still green and the heavy snow caused a significant number of downed trees and power lines, and power outages were widespread. Some residents in Billings were without power for more than a day. Road closures also resulted from the significant snowfall. Snow amounts ranged from 8 to 14 inches across most of the region, and the Billings airport received 10.8 inches.

8. December 2003 Christmas blizzard: A strong winter storm brought heavy snow and strong winds to the region from December 26th through 28th. Significant blowing and drifting snow produced 2 to 5 foot drifts and many roads were closed, including Interstates 90 and 94 in the Billings area. Storm totals included 2 feet at Lame Deer, 18 inches at Pryor, 15 inches at Judith Gap, 14 inches at Ryegate and Roundup, 12 inches at Lavina and Red Lodge, and 11 inches at Billings and Joliet.



2003 Blizzard (Gazette)

recorded consecutive high temperatures of 107, 106 and 108 degrees on the 12th, 13th and 14th, respectively. The 107 degree reading on the 12th broke the all-time record, 106 degrees on the 13th tied the previous record, and 108 degrees on the 14th set the all-time record high for Billings again. These are currently 3 of the top 5 all-time hottest temperatures observed at Billings. Miles City reached 110 on the 14th of July, and had 5 consecutive days of 100 degrees or hotter. Sheridan hit 107 degrees on the 14th.

6. October 2008 heavy snow event: A deep upper-level low pressure system over the central Rockies brought periods of heavy snow to the region from October 9th through the 12th. Up to 2 feet of wet snow fell in the Billings area, nearly 3 feet of snow fell along the foothills from Nye to Red Lodge, and 4 feet fell along the north and east slopes of the Beartooth and Absaroka Mountains. Power outages resulted from downed trees and power lines.

5. November 2007 wind event: Widespread damaging winds affected much of the region from the afternoon of the 12th through the morning of the 13th. Strongest winds were observed along the eastern slopes



2002 Heat (Gazette)

of the mountains, and winds were estimated at near 100 mph at Nye and Red Lodge. A significant number of downed trees was reported along the foothills near Red Lodge. Downed trees and power lines resulted in many power outages as well. Recent dry and warm weather helped to cause the Chi Chi Fire near Melville, and estimated 80 to 100 mph winds during the night of the 12th spread the wildfire rapidly. The fire, which burned across highway 191 north of Big Timber, torched over 30,000 acres and destroyed 3 homes in a short time. A fire engine was burned over and fire personnel were injured in this event.



2007 Chi Chi Fire (Conner)

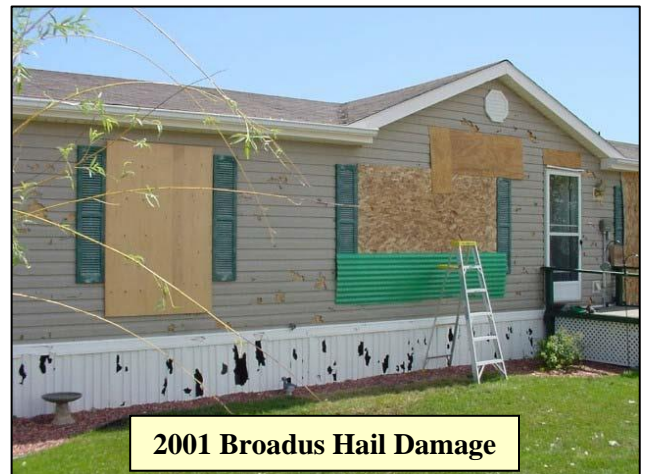
- 4. May 2005 Beartooth Highway washout:** A strong spring storm system brought up to 7 inches of precipitation to Red Lodge and the surrounding mountains on May 10th and 11th. The heavy precipitation, which was in the form of rain and snow, produced mudslides which washed out the Beartooth Highway just southwest of Red Lodge. The highway was closed for the entire summer of 2005, affecting tourism and travel in the Cooke City area and Yellowstone National Park. The highway was repaired during the summer and early fall, and opened briefly in October of 2005, before closing for the winter season shortly thereafter. The heavy precipitation also produced significant lower elevation flooding across portions of Sweet Grass, Stillwater, Carbon and Sheridan Counties as the combination of significant rainfall and mountain snowmelt raised river and stream levels quickly.



2005 Beartooth Hwy (Gazette)

- 3. July 2001 severe weather:** A persistently favorable weather pattern along with abundant low-level shear and moisture allowed for significant severe thunderstorm activity from late June through the end of July. Large hail associated with the thunderstorm activity was common during this period. One of the more significant thunderstorms occurred on the evening of July 18th

at Broadus. This storm produced baseball to softball size hail, and there were reports of numerous car windshields smashed, roof/siding/window damage on homes, and trees stripped of leaves. It was even reported that a television was broken as hail bounced off the ground and through the windows of a house. The Broadus Elementary and High schools reported approximately 60 to 70 windows broken with this storm. Several private businesses had their outdoor signs broken. Other significant severe weather reports include: 80 mph winds just south of Roundup on the 2nd, flash flooding in Livingston on the 12th, baseball size hail and broken windows near Ryegate on the 13th, flash flooding in Hardin on the 13th, flash flooding in Decker on the 14th, flash flooding in Billings on the 17th, 91 mph wind gust and trees downed north of Pompey's Pillar on the 19th, two tornadoes observed north of Baker on the 25th, flash flooding in Miles City on the 25th, baseball size hail near Hysham and Hathaway on the 26th, 80 mph winds south of Miles City on the 26th, 100 mph wind gust with large trees downed near Hardin on the 27th, 60-70 mph winds and damage from Joliet to Billings and Forsyth on the 28th, flash flooding in Miles City on the 31st.



2001 Broadus Hail Damage

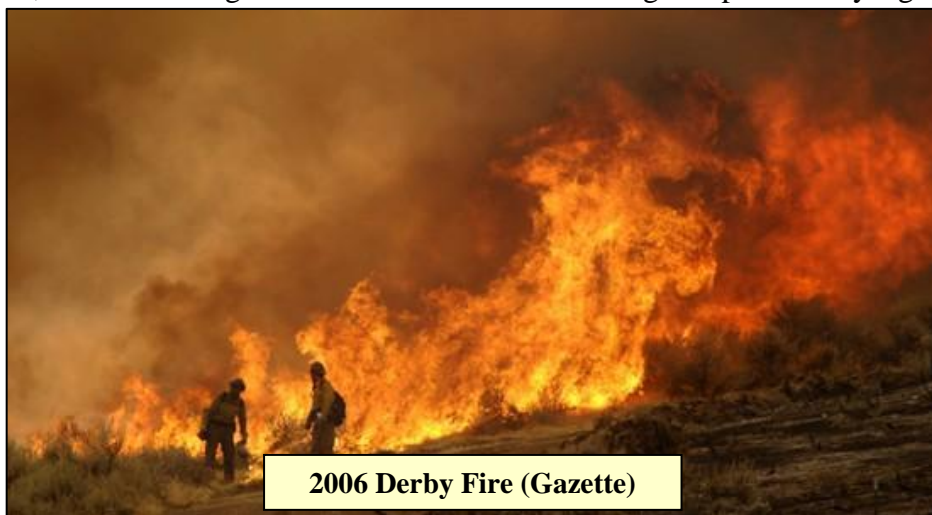
2. March & April 2009 Southeast Montana blizzards: Three blizzards affected southeast Montana in a span of only 2 weeks from late March to early April. The first blizzard occurred on the 23rd and 24th,



bringing heavy snow and strong winds to Fallon, Carter and Powder River Counties. Highway 212 from Broadus to the Wyoming state line was closed, as was the highway from Ekalaka to Alzada. Drifts to 8 feet were reported, and motorists were stranded across Powder River and Carter Counties. In an attempt to rescue stranded motorists, two Department of Transportation trucks became stuck and stranded between Boyes and Hammond. The stranded motorists and DOT drivers spent the night in a cab of a DOT truck before making it to safety the next day. Snowfall totals in this first event ranged from 1 to 3 feet. Due to the wind and significant drifting, a large number of livestock was lost during the event. The second blizzard occurred on the 29th and 30th of March, and brought heavy snow and strong winds from

north central Wyoming across southeast Montana, affecting the area also impacted by the 23-24 event. Snowfall up to a foot along with wind gusts to 40 mph caused significant blowing and drifting snow. The third blizzard occurred on April 3rd and 4th, bringing an additional 6 to 12 inches of snow to an area from Broadus and Biddle to Ekalaka.

1. 2006 Fire Season: The fire season of 2006 was a memorable one, and definitely the most significant one of the decade for southeast Montana. Several large wildfires occurred throughout the region, including fires near populated areas of Yellowstone County. Wildland fires burned over a million acres across Montana in 2006. The **Saunders Fire** near Columbus was one of the first of the season and burned 4 homes. The **Pine Ridge Complex** and **Bundy Railroad Fire** ignited in July and together burned over 230,000 acres in eastern Yellowstone and extreme northern Big Horn Counties. These fires spread rapidly due to strong thunderstorm winds on July 12th. The Bundy Railroad Fire affected areas north of Pompey's Pillar, whereas the Pine Ridge Complex burned nearby south of Interstate 94. The **Emerald Hills Fire** in Lockwood burned 3800 acres in August, threatening several homes and causing evacuations. The **Derby Fire** south of Big Timber spanned an area along the foothills south of Interstate 90 between the Boulder and Stillwater Rivers, and burned nearly 200,000 acres. The fire caused periodic evacuations of many residents near the fire, and at one point closed Interstate 90 between Livingston and Columbus as the fire surged toward the highway. The Derby Fire burned at least 22 homes along the Stillwater River valley when it surged from a cold frontal passage on August 31st, and it also impacted operations at Stillwater Mine. The fire was ignited on August 22nd by lightning and was not contained until October. The **Jungle Fire** in rugged terrain southeast of Livingston in Park County burned over 24,000 acres along the West Boulder River. During one particularly significant burn period, ash fall was



observed at Billings, and the smoke cloud produced by the fire eventually impacted visibilities as far away as Chicago. The fire was ignited on August 25th and was contained in October. Other notable fires during the 2006 season include: **Sarpy Creek Fire** (northeast of Custer), **Watt Draw Fire** (southeast of Ashland), **Horton-Hay Complex** (near Hathaway), and **Big Creek Fire** (in Paradise Valley).