

Storm Data and Unusual Weather Phenomena - January 2015

Location	Date/Time	Deaths & Injuries	Property & Crop Dmg	Event Type and Details
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TEXAS, South Panhandle

(TX-Z023) SWISHER, (TX-Z024) BRISCOE, (TX-Z025) HALL, (TX-Z026) CHILDRESS, (TX-Z030) FLOYD, (TX-Z031) MOTLEY, (TX-Z032) COTTLE, (TX-Z037) DICKENS, (TX-Z038) KING, (TX-Z044) STONEWALL

01/01/15 00:00 CST	0	Drought
01/31/15 23:59 CST	0	

Since late December 2014, drought conditions expanded by a small margin across the southeast Texas Panhandle and portions of the Rolling Plains. Severe (D2) levels grew south to northern Stonewall County and also west to include portions of King and Swisher counties. Extreme (D3) drought categories remained confined to Childress and Cottle Counties.

Episodes of rain and snow in early to mid January tended to drop reduced precipitation amounts over the drought stricken areas compared to locations farther west; however, a large storm system by January 31st did bring much needed moisture to the southeast Panhandle and Rolling Plains where rainfall totaled between 1/2 inch to nearly 1 inch. Additional rainfall events of this magnitude were still needed to reduce drought levels appreciably and improve area water supplies.

In mid January, a spell of unseasonable warmth and breezy conditions led to an uptick of wildfire concerns especially in the southeast Panhandle. One grass fire about two miles south of Memphis (Hall County) consumed several hundred acres of tall grass on the 15th. Area fuel loads were at or above normal with energy release component values generally at normal, however surpluses in topsoil moisture by the final day of January greatly alleviated the short term wildfire concerns.

Fortunately, agricultural drought impacts in January were negligible thanks to the aforementioned precipitation. Winter wheat and area livestock were noted to be in fair to good condition.

(TX-Z035) LUBBOCK, (TX-Z042) GARZA, (TX-Z043) KENT

01/02/15 05:00 CST	0	Ice Storm
01/03/15 00:06 CST	0	

(TX-Z023) SWISHER, (TX-Z024) BRISCOE, (TX-Z028) LAMB, (TX-Z029) HALE, (TX-Z030) FLOYD, (TX-Z031) MOTLEY, (TX-Z032) COTTLE, (TX-Z033) COCHRAN, (TX-Z034) HOCKLEY, (TX-Z036) CROSBY, (TX-Z037) DICKENS, (TX-Z038) KING, (TX-Z039) YOAKUM, (TX-Z040) TERRY, (TX-Z044) STONEWALL

01/02/15 07:00 CST	0	Winter Weather
01/03/15 22:00 CST	0	

(TX-Z021) PARMER, (TX-Z022) CASTRO, (TX-Z027) BAILEY

01/02/15 14:30 CST	0	Heavy Snow
01/03/15 01:30 CST	0	

Following occasional light snow and freezing drizzle on New Year's Day (only trace accumulations), a potent storm system approached the region on January 2nd from southern New Mexico before exiting the Rolling Plains on January 3rd. Ahead of this storm, an influx of moisture and lift bolstered wintry precipitation throughout the region on the 2nd. This precipitation fell mainly in the form of freezing rain in the Rolling Plains, snow in the far western South Plains and southwest Texas Panhandle, with a combination of freezing rain, sleet and snow in between. As the storm system passed overhead on the night of the 2nd, snow became the dominant precipitation type before ending by the morning of the 3rd. The greatest swath of snow between four and nine inches deep fell across the far southwest Texas Panhandle. Locations in the far southeast Texas Panhandle, including Childress (Childress County), were spared the impacts of this winter storm as precipitation there was simply too light and brief in duration.

The worst impacts by far were dealt to portions of the southeast South Plains into the Rolling Plains where freezing rain produced ice between 1/4 and 1/2 inch thick. In addition to downing some trees and limbs, the ice damaged about 100 miles in total of power lines and caused numerous power outages. The heaviest swath of ice fell in an area from Tahoka (Lynn County) east to Post (Garza County) and Clairemont (Kent County) where Highway 380 was closed for about eight hours until utility crews could fully remove all downed power lines. At the height of the storm, Lyntegar Electric COOP reported 10,117 customers without power across the far southern South Plains. Fortunately, most roads in the Rolling Plains remained wet due to ground temperatures hovering just above freezing, but colder temperatures farther west and northwest created such hazardous conditions that regional travel became nearly impossible at times; especially on US Highway 84 from near Progress (Bailey County) to Farwell (Parmer County) where several inches of wet snow accumulated. This stretch of roadway remained hard-packed in snow and ice until the afternoon of the 5th when temperatures finally warmed above freezing. Hundreds of mostly minor vehicle accidents occurred as some holiday travelers dared the elements, but fortunately no serious injuries or fatalities were reported. There is no monetary estimate at this time of the combined economic, property and utility losses suffered by this storm.

Below is a list of locations that observed winter weather warning criteria accumulations of snow or ice:

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Rhea (Parmer County) - 9 inches of snow
 Friona and Farwell (Parmer County) - 6 inches of snow
 10 SW Dimmitt (Castro County) - 5 inches of snow
 Progress (Bailey County) - 4 inches of snow
 Lubbock Airport (Lubbock County) - 0.26 inches of freezing rain
 Paducah (Cottle County) - 0.25 inches of freezing rain
 Post (Garza County) - 0.50 inches of freezing rain
 10W Clairemont (Kent County) - 0.50 inches of freezing rain.

(TX-Z021) PARMER, (TX-Z022) CASTRO, (TX-Z023) SWISHER, (TX-Z024) BRISCOE, (TX-Z027) BAILEY, (TX-Z028) LAMB, (TX-Z029) HALE, (TX-Z034) HOCKLEY

01/21/15 18:00 CST	0	Heavy Snow
01/22/15 15:00 CST	0	

(TX-Z025) HALL, (TX-Z026) CHILDRESS, (TX-Z030) FLOYD, (TX-Z031) MOTLEY, (TX-Z033) COCHRAN, (TX-Z035) LUBBOCK, (TX-Z036) CROSBY, (TX-Z039) YOAKUM, (TX-Z040) TERRY, (TX-Z041) LYNN, (TX-Z042) GARZA

01/21/15 20:00 CST	0	Winter Weather
01/22/15 15:00 CST	0	

A pair of upper level disturbances phased together on Wednesday, January 21st across the lower Rockies, serving as the large scale lifting mechanism for precipitation formation. Both of these systems brought an abundant increase in moisture as colder air drifted in from the north. An initial shield of precipitation edged in from the northwest across the far southwest Panhandle ahead of the northern originating disturbance, while a band of showers moved across the Rolling Plains downstream of the southern upper trough. Temperatures during the afternoon of the 21st warmed into the 40s and 50s, keeping precipitation in the liquid state initially before transitioning to snow into the evening as the airmass cooled. Snow, mostly on the light side but with heavier bands from time to time, continued into the evening and overnight hours and through much of the day Thursday January, 22nd across much of the far southern Texas Panhandle and South Plains. In the Rolling Plains and far southeast Panhandle, temperatures remained warm enough to keep precipitation mainly in the form of rain as some light snow mixed in periodically.

Impacts were relatively minor as temperatures generally remained in the mid to upper 20s or warmer while snow fell, allowing for wet to slushy road conditions. However, reports of traffic accidents were received throughout Lubbock as well as along US Highway 84 southeast of Lubbock.

Snowfall amounts ranged from 4 to 7 inches from western to central portions of the southern Texas Panhandle through the northern to central South Plains. Areas farther south and east on the Caprock measured snow mainly in the 1 to 4 inch range while locations in the Rolling Plains and far southeast Panhandle received around 1 inch. Accumulations were held to trace amounts or less into the southeastern Rolling Plains where the majority of precipitation fell as rain.

Snowfall totals from the event are below:

Friona (Parmer County) - 7.0 inches
 Tulia (Swisher County) - 6.0 inches
 Plainview (Hale County) - 6.0 inches
 Olton (Lamb County) - 4.5 inches
 Dimmitt (Castro County) - 4.0 inches
 Vigo Park (Swisher County) - 4.0 inches
 Silverton (Briscoe County) - 4.0 inches
 Caprock Canyons State Park (Briscoe County) - 4.0 inches
 Muleshoe (Bailey County) - 4.0 inches
 Levelland (Hockley County) - 4.0 inches
 Lubbock Airport (Lubbock County) - 3.4 inches
 Brownfield (Terry County) - 3.3 inches
 Turkey (Hall County) - 3.2 inches
 Morton (Cochran County) - 3.1 inches
 Matador (Motley County) - 3.0 inches
 Crosbyton (Crosby County) - 2.0 inches
 Childress (Childress County) - 1.5 inches
 Post (Garza County) - 1.3 inches
 Floydada (Floyd County) - 1.2 inches
 Plains and Denver City (Yoakum County) - 1.0 inch
 Tahoka (Lynn County) - 1.0 inch
 Lake Alan Henry (Garza County) - 1.0 inch.

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