

December 26-27, 2015 Blizzard

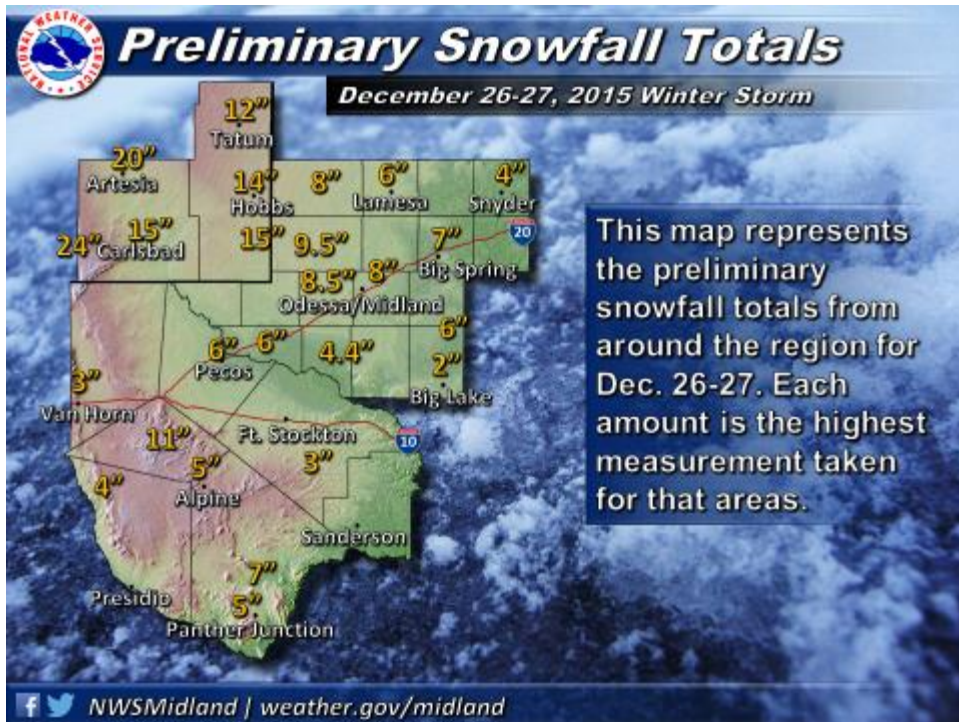
An upper level storm system intensified over the southwest United States on Christmas Day. This system moved southeastward over the next two days across portions of northeast Mexico and Far West Texas. This coincided with the arrival of an arctic air mass into the area, setting the stage for potential heavy snow and blustery conditions. Forecasters recognized the potential for a snowstorm, mentioning its possibility as early as December 22, and then issuing the first watches three days in advance on Christmas Eve morning. The result of this weather pattern was the most significant winter storm ever in the WFO Midland County Warning Area.

Danny Kiper (Field Site Security Officer) from FLETC (Federal Law Enforcement Training Center in Artesia, NM) commented that the “Forecast was spot on” and the email briefings beforehand enabled them to prepare for the different contingencies. Based on the information in the email briefings FLETC provided clothes, blankets, food, and water that enabled the security personnel to shelter-in-place (for as long as 36 hours in some cases). There were snow drifts up to 10 feet deep at FLETC. Due to the briefings from the WFO Midland forecast staff, they were well-prepared and suffered zero injuries from the storm.

Jennifer Armendariz (Emergency Manager from Eddy County) commented that “based on our email briefings ahead of the historic blizzard all the grocery stores were able to stock up and not run out of essentials.” Jennifer was also informed that based on our email briefings that farmers were able to stock up on feed and hay for their cattle. Jennifer heard that only 500 cattle were lost...all from one ranch that didn’t believe that a blizzard could happen in Eddy County! Based on the email briefings, and the early initiation of Winter Storm and Blizzard Watches, lives were saved and ranchers avoided loss of dairy cattle and milk from the blizzard.

NWS partner Wendell Malone stated, “Your forecasts, watches, warnings, and special weather statements during this Historic Blizzard were simply phenomenal. No doubt your hard work paid off for us locally. No telling how many lives you may have saved. Congrats and job well done.

The following graphic shows snow amounts that occurred across portions of southeast New Mexico and west Texas during this event.



Historically, Eddy and Lea Counties in New Mexico received record snowfall at many locations. Snowfall reports from the Artesia area ranged from 17-20 inches, which eclipsed the previous record of 14 inches set in 1931. Carlsbad totaled 15 inches of snowfall, equaling the total from the 1931 storm, while Hobbs and Eunice also broke all-time 24-hour snowfall records during the event with 14" and 15" respectively.

While no previous data was available for comparison at that location, the 24" snowfall in Queen was highest snowfall total ever reported in Eddy County since records have been kept, surpassing a 22.5" snowfall in Hope, NM set in April of 1983.

Overall, this event surpassed the December 1931 snowstorm as the most significant winter storm ever in southeast New Mexico. It was also the first storm ever in WFO Midland's history where Blizzard Warnings were issued and verified.

While snows were widespread across west Texas, with 6-9 inch snow totals being common across the Texas Permian Basin, these were generally not of record magnitude. Significant snows also extended back into the mountain areas of southwest Texas.

Below are the reported snowfall reports in tabular format:

QUEEN	24.0 IN	0640 PM 12/27
3 N ARTESIA	18.0 IN	0753 PM 12/27
ARTESIA	17.0 IN	0735 PM 12/27

4 E EUNICE	15.0 IN	1030 PM 12/27
3 S CARLSBAD	15.0 IN	0757 PM 12/27
HOBBS	14.0 IN	0435 PM 12/27
2 NW CARLSBAD	13.2 IN	0633 PM 12/27
GREENWOOD	12.0 IN	0659 AM 12/28
MIDLAND INTERNATIONAL	7.6 IN	1200 AM 12/28
GREENWOOD	7.5 IN	0744 PM 12/27
PECOS	6.0 IN	0713 PM 12/27
MIDLAND	6.0 IN	0640 PM 12/27
MONAHANS	6.0 IN	1227 PM 12/27
ALPINE	5.0 IN	0514 PM 12/27
7 WNW ALPINE	5.0 IN	0514 PM 12/27
SNYDER	4.0 IN	0634 PM 12/27
BIG LAKE	2.0 IN	0529 PM 12/27



Artesia, NM (Courtesy of Jackie Heron)



Artesia, NM (Courtesy of Barry Price)



7:21 AM MST
December 27, 2015
Wendell L. Malone
Carlsbad, New Mexico

Carlsbad, NM (Courtesy of Wendell Malone)