



MIAMI-SOUTH FLORIDA

National Weather Service Forecast Office

<http://www.weather.gov/miami>

45TH ANNIVERSARY OF SNOW IN SOUTH FLORIDA

January 19th, 2022: Snow fell in South Florida for the first time in recorded history on January 19th, 1977,. Residents and visitors were both surprised and thrilled at the rare phenomena, and local newspapers ran headlines which were nearly as big as it would be for major national or world events. Snow was seen across most of southern Florida as far south as Homestead and even on Miami Beach. Reports of snow were also received at Freeport, Grand Bahama Island on the other side of the Gulf Stream from Southeast Florida.

Snow in Florida is not as rare as it is believed to be, but this applies to far northern sections of the peninsula as well as the Florida Panhandle. For most of the peninsula, especially Central and South Florida, it is indeed an exceptionally rare event. The farthest south snow had been previously observed was along a Fort Myers to Fort Pierce line in February 1899.

The snow came on the heels of a strong arctic cold front which moved rapidly down the Florida peninsula on gusty northwest winds of over 30 mph from late on January 18th through the pre-dawn hours of January 19th. A band of precipitation followed the passage of the arctic front, and every reporting station in North and Central Florida recorded at least a trace of snow. Tampa measured 0.20 inches and Plant City, east of Tampa, measured up to 2 inches of the white stuff. West Palm Beach reported its first snowfall on record at 6:10 am, and continued to report light snow through 8 am. LaBelle also reported snow in their cooperative observation report submitted the morning of January 19th.

Rain began to mix with snow over areas farther south, and eventually fell as snow flurries across Broward and Dade counties between 8 and 9:30 am. The weather observations from Miami International Airport, the official weather reporting site for Miami, did not report the snowfall. However, the NWS cooperative station in Hollywood, as well as the one at the Everglades National Park's Royal Palm Ranger station in far southern Dade County, reported a trace of snow. As a result of this and the widespread eyewitness reports of snowfall, an asterisk is included in the official precipitation records for Miami to indicate the widespread reports of snow on the morning of January 19th.

It is interesting to note that although air temperatures were slightly above freezing when the snow fell, the freezing level on the morning of the 19th was at only 1,500 feet above sea level, which is at a very low altitude for South Florida. This prevented the precipitation from melting before reaching the ground.

Airport Weather Observations from January 19th, 1977

Palm Beach International Airport KPBI - 7 AM EST Wind NW 15 knots gusting to 23 knots. Visibility 9 miles in light snow. Overcast skies at 3,200 feet. Temperature 2C/36F, dewpoint -2C/28F. Snow began at 610 AM EST.

METAR KPBI 191200Z 31015G23KT 9SM -SN OVC032 02/M02 A2995 RMK SB10

Fort Lauderdale/Hollywood International Airport KFLF - 9 AM EST Wind NW 15 knots gusting to 28 knots. Visibility 4 miles in light snow. Scattered clouds 1,000 ft, broken clouds at 2,200 feet, overcast clouds at 10,000 feet. Temperature 1.7C/35F, dewpoint 1.1C/34F. Peak wind NW 31 knots at 840 AM.

METAR KFLF 191400Z 32015G28KT 4SM -SN SCT010 BKN022 OVC100 02/01 A3007 RMK PK WND 40/3031 SLPNO T00170011

The snow occurred during a prolonged period of very cold temperatures in South Florida. The first arctic front moved through the region late on the afternoon of January 16th, and temperatures failed to reach the 60-degree mark in Miami for four consecutive days from January 17th to the 20th. The coldest air and snow arrived with the second arctic front on the 19th, with the afternoon high only reaching the mid to upper 40s. Miami's afternoon high of 47 degrees that day was the second coldest afternoon high on record.

The most significant impact of the very cold air was felt on the night of the 19th and morning of the 20th, when temperatures dropped to at or below freezing everywhere in South Florida.

Here are some of the low temperatures recorded across South Florida on the morning of January 20th:

LOCATION	LOW TEMPERATURE
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LABELLE	19 *
DEVILS GARDEN	20 *
HOMESTEAD AGRICULTURAL CTR	23
IMMOKALEE	24
BELLE GLADE	24
MOORE HAVEN	25
NORTH MIAMI BEACH	25
NAPLES	26
WEST PALM BEACH	27 *
FORT LAUDERDALE	28 *
HOLLYWOOD	28
MIAMI INTERNATIONAL	31
MIAMI BEACH	32 *

* INDICATES ALL-TIME LOW TEMPERATURE RECORD AT THAT LOCATION

Temperatures over interior and western sections of South Florida were at or below freezing for 10-14 hours, and some locations were at or below 28 degrees for 4 to 8 hours. The extended duration of freezing temperatures devastated the agricultural community in South Florida, with estimated losses of \$350 million statewide and over \$100 million in Dade County alone (1977 USD). Skinned fruit such as tangerines, tangelos and temple oranges were almost totally destroyed, as were tender vegetables such as beans, corn, tomatoes and squash. A total of 35 counties in Florida were declared disaster areas. Sprinkles ran all night at most farms and nurseries, and some of the water also got on to some roadways, causing ice to form on some western Dade County roads.

Could snow fall again in South Florida? History has already shown us that it has, and if it's happened once, it's reasonable to think it could happen again.

South Florida Newspaper Front Pages



FORT LAUDERDALE DAILY NEWS



MIAMI NEWS



MIAMI HERALD



PALM BEACH POST