

# Early Season Winter Storm Brings Heavy, Wet Snow to North-central and Southwest MT

Date : October 10 and 11 2026

## Event Overview :

An early season winter storm brought heavy, wet snow to much of north-central and southwest MT on the weekend of October 10th and 11th. While lower elevation snow struggled to accumulate on warm surfaces, many mountain passes endured traffic incidents and delays from snow packed roads. There were also numerous reports of tree damage and power outages from oatmeal textured snow caking onto near fully leafed trees and power lines. Temperatures remained near freezing for the entire event, which led to wide disparities in snow amounts between some cities and their nearby higher plains and foothills. Afternoon temperatures were well into the 70s and 80s at most lower elevations less than 24 hours before the flakes began falling, which made the event more impactful than it would be if it occurred later in the cool season.



Heavy snow weighed down trees in Moccasin MT on Sunday.  
Image Credit: Mark LaPerna Via Ryan Dennis FB



An aerial view of Great Falls showed the wide disparity of snow between the city and Gore Hill. Image Credit: Amanda Wilson

## Meteorological set up :

A mid-level trough situated over the Pacific Northwest maintained a moist southwesterly jet stream aloft (Figure 1), while a cold front brought northerly flow upslope flow in the lower levels (Figure 2). The combination of the deep cold air layer with a continuous supply of elevated moisture (Figure 3) supported a thick snow growth zone or dendritic growth zone (DGZ) (Figure 4). Additional moisture from the remnants of tropical storm Rachel also enhanced the snow (Figure 5), especially over southwest MT on Sunday.

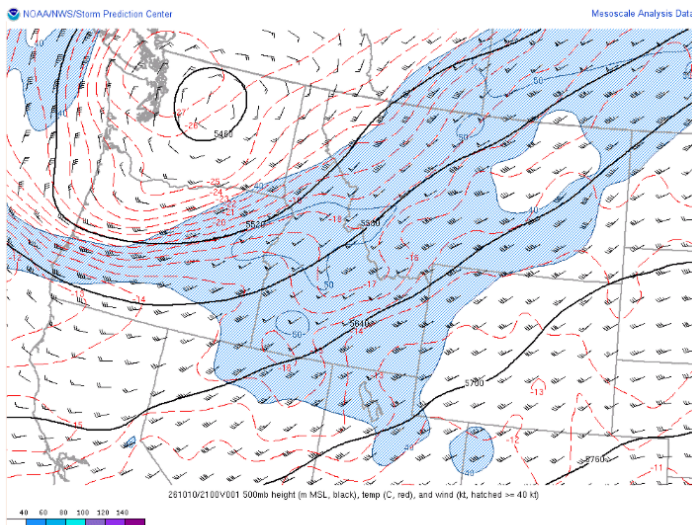


Figure 1 : SPC Mesoscale analysis showing 500 mb height (dm), temperature (C), and wind (kt) Saturday 6 PM MDT 10/10/2026

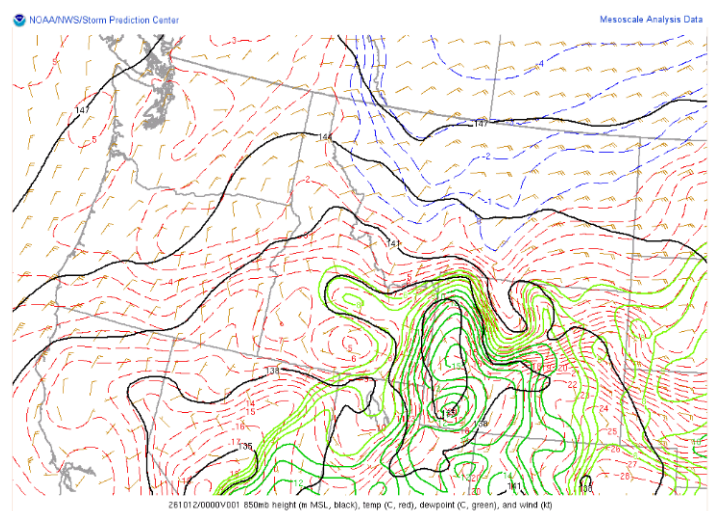


Figure 2 : SPC Mesoscale analysis showing 850 mb height (dm), temperature (C), and dewpoint (C) Sunday 6 PM MDT 10/11/2026

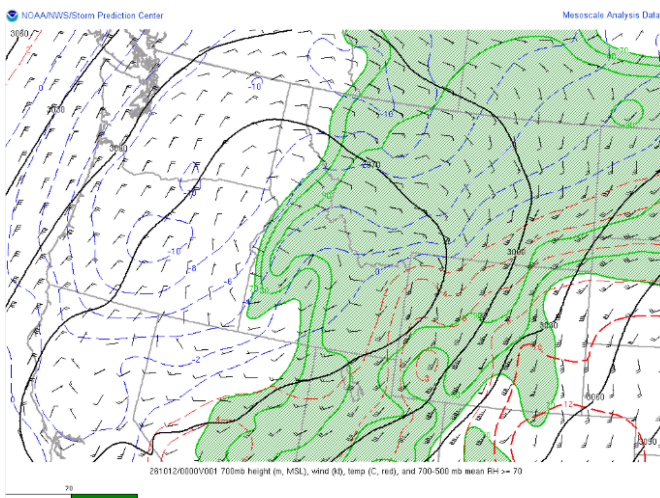


Figure 3 : SPC Mesoscale analysis showing 700 mb height (dm), temperature (C), and mean RH (%) Sunday 6 PM MDT 10/11/2026

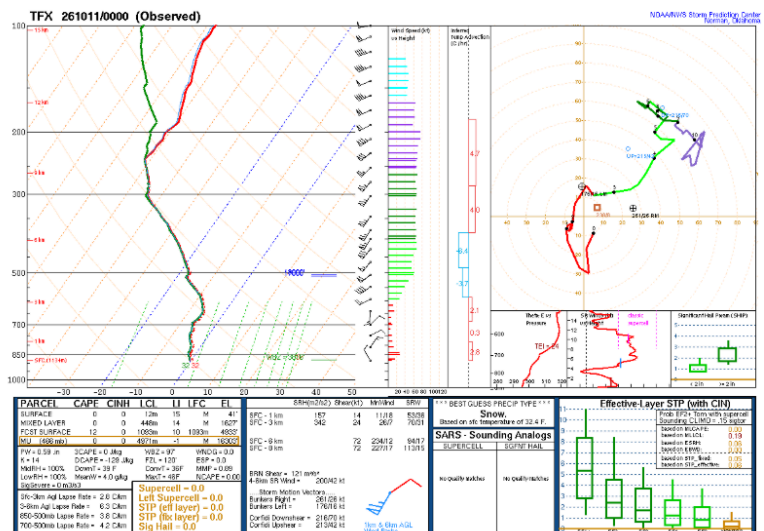


Figure 4 : Saturday morning's sounding (10/10/2026) from Great Falls Showed a deeply saturated atmospheric profile

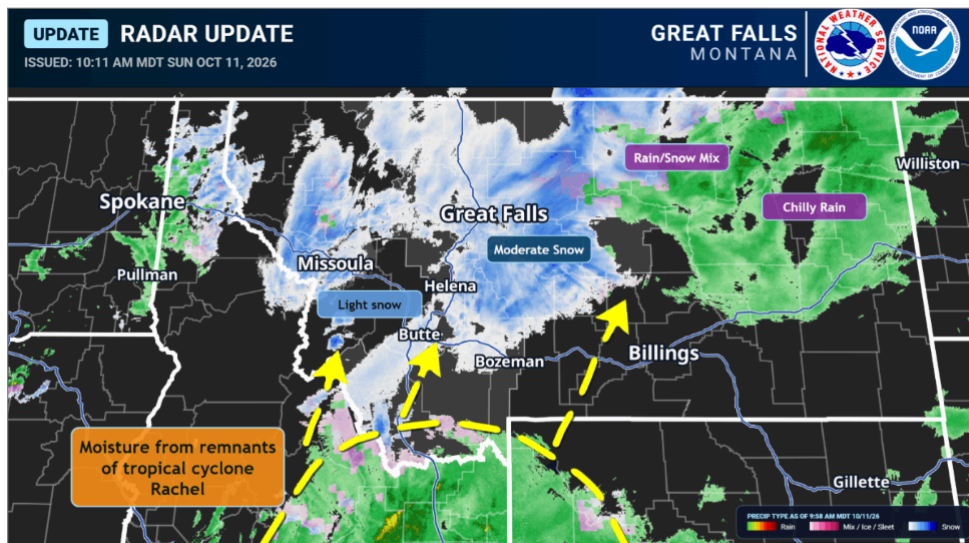
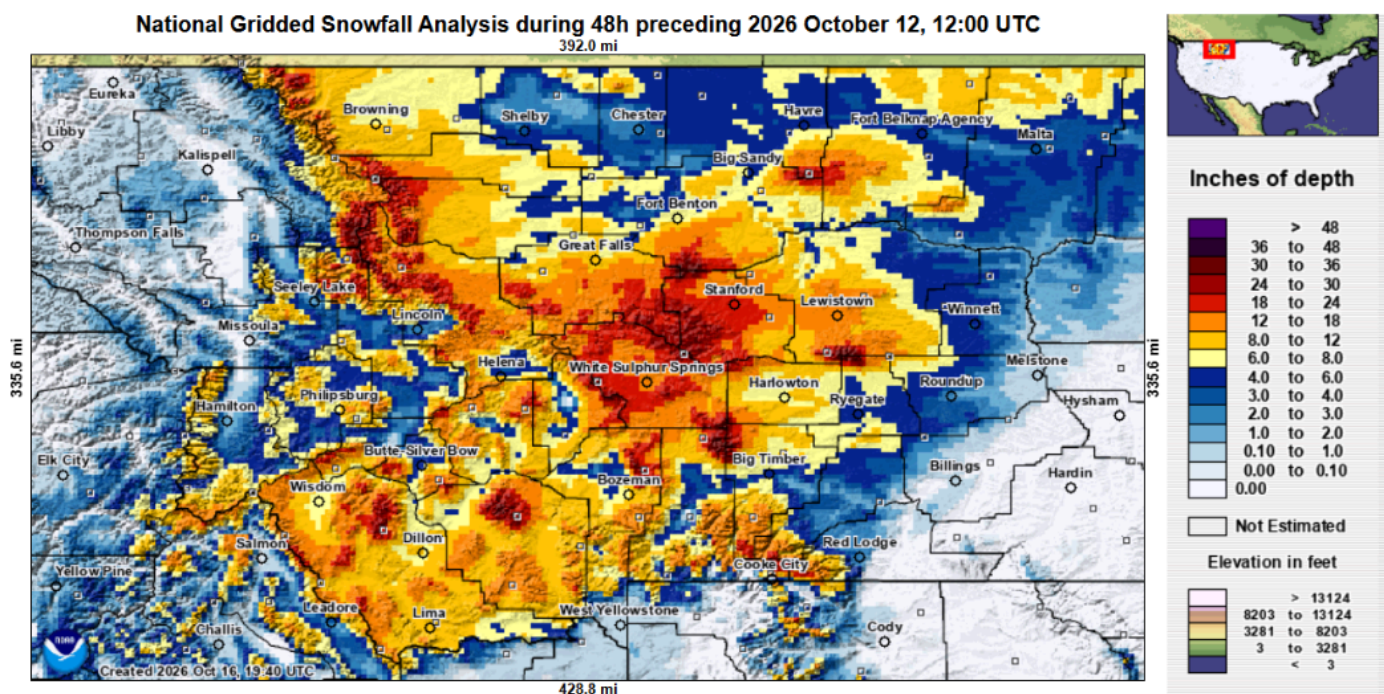


Figure 5 : Moisture from the remnants of tropical storm Rachel enhanced the snow, especially in SW MT on Sunday

## Snowfall Amounts :



National Operational Hydrologic Remote Sensing Center (NOHRSC) gridded 48 hr snowfall analysis for the period ending 6 AM October 12th

## Event Images :



Heavy snow stalls traffic at Homestake Pass. Image Credit : MDT/KPAX TV



Tree damage from heavy snow in Helena. Image Credit: Teresa Merkel from Ryan Dennis FB



Power line damage in Jefferson County. Image Credit : Jefferson County Volunteer Fire