

STORY ARCHIVE

As Spring Arrives, Massachusetts and Connecticut Bid Good Riddance to One Very Snowy, Cold Winter

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AMHERST, Mass. - Precipitation totals for the meteorological winter (December through February) that just ended were well above average in many areas of New England and temperatures were lower than usual, according to preliminary reports compiled by Michael Rawlins, manager of the Climate System Research Center at the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

At many locations including Boston, Worcester and Amherst, more than half of the seasonal snowfall occurred over a four-week period between Jan. 7 and Feb. 3. So far this season, Hartford has received 84 inches of snow, all coming since Dec. 1. The 2010-11 season there currently ranks as the fifth snowiest on record, he adds.

Rawlins says data from the National Weather Service show that Hartford experienced its snowiest single month on record in January, when more than a whopping 54 inches of snow was recorded at Bradley International Airport. There, the winter's total precipitation was 15.1 inches, more than 46 percent above average and the fourth highest total on record going back to 1904. Winter precipitation is the total from all forms including rain, freezing rain, snow and sleet.

Boston's snowfall total currently stands at 79 inches which would rank eighth on the snowfall record list there. Total winter precipitation at Boston, 12.8 inches, is 20 percent above the long-term average.

More than 85 inches of snow have fallen at Worcester, while Amherst has received 57.4 inches. Worcester's winter 14.5 inches of precipitation, more than 44 percent above average, ranks among the top 10 totals for December through February there, where records extends back to 1893.

Most regional reporting stations also saw colder than average temperatures as well, Rawlins points out. Boston's mean air temperature over the meteorological winter was 30.3 degrees F, 1.6 degrees colder than average. Worcester's mean was 24.6 degrees F, also 1.6 degrees below average.

Temperatures recorded at Hartford's Bradley International Airport departed even further from average, coming in at 26 degrees F, 2.4 degrees below the long-term average. At Amherst, the temperature during December through February averaged 23.2 degrees F, which is 1.9 degrees below normal.

Despite the winter's cold, heating degree days for the season to March 12 are near average. Heating degree days reflect the cumulative difference between the mean daily temperature and 65 degrees F, calculated since July 1. For example, there is one heating degree day counted for a day that averaged 64 degrees. The population-weighted degree-day total for Massachusetts as of March 12 was 4,983. An average year sees 4,980 degree-days as of March 12.

Rawlins says this nearly normal seasonal accumulation is largely a reflection of the above-average temperatures our region experienced during autumn. At both Boston and Worcester, heating degree-

day accumulations are also less than 1 percent from their average values to date. At Hartford, degree-day accumulation is less than 1 percent above average, reflecting a slightly colder heating season there. At most locations daily minimum air temperatures have been farther below the long-term average than have the daily maximum temperatures.

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