

SEVERE ICE STORM

Atlantic Coast Observers Network MARYLAND / DELAWARE CHAPTER

This month will be remembered by its cold and ice even though the temperatures averaged 3 to 5 degrees above normal. Early in month the storm track was west of mountains. It brought ahead of it warm overrunning air causing snow, sleet freezing rain and then rain. Following the storm cold air returned to the two state region. The only major snowstorm to occur this month was on the 8th. Three to five inches was common across the region except lighter amounts fell east and south of Washington. After the major ice storm on the 14th and 15th the upper air became more zonal which allowed much warmer temperatures. **Bobby Miller of Millers 4 ENE** noted that his average temperature for the 1st to 16th was 15.7 degrees colder than for the 17th to the 31st.

The three week plus cold spell which began around the first day of winter last month hit its climax with a major ice storm on the 14th and 15th. It hit hardest north and west of Washington DC. According to newspaper articles half a million customers in Central Maryland lost their power due to damage caused by heavy ice on trees and power lines. Some of our ACON observers lost power for an extended time. The longest reported was 40 hours by **Kevin Shaw of Gaithersburg 2 WNW**, and 36 hours by **Joe Terry of Forest Glen, Silver Spring**. The storm began on the 14th with light rain and drizzle with temperature in the 20's. Warm air from the ocean which moved north and west during the early morning hours of the 15th turned freezing rain to heavy rain in northern Delaware before dawn did not reach west of the Chesapeake Bay.

The following is from Joe Terry's monthly highlights. Other observer comments appear on page 2. "Major ice storm. Worst I've seen in 25 years of observing. Though significant icing occurred from morning to evening on the 14th, the worst was yet to come. As the main body of heavy precip reached this station at 0330 (on the 15th), there was an abrupt E to W wind shift followed by a small but highly significant 4 degree drop in temperature from 32 to 28 degrees in a half hour. Several hours of moderate to heavy freezing rain ensued. Between 0400 and 0600 was an ominous but spectacular display of orange and blue flashes all around, accompanied by the sound of large tree limbs crackling and falling to the ground.

EXTREMES REPORTED BY ACON OBSERVERS

MAXIMUM TEMPERATURE

Jug Bay Wetlands	73
Forest Glen	73
Hollywood	73

MINIMUM TEMPERATURE

Eagle Rock	-4
Gaithersburg 2 WNW	3

WARMEST AVG. TEMP.

Ridge	41.9
Whaleysville	40.2
Hollywood	39.8

COLDEST AVG. TEMP.

Eagle Rock	28.9
Union Mills 2SE	31.2
Westminster 4SSE	32.0

MAXIMUM PRECIPITATION

Hagerstown 1E	6.39
Finksburg	6.36
Kingsville 1S	6.22

MINIMUM PRECIPITATION

Morganza	4.47
Hollywood	4.48
Millersville 1SE	4.61

MAXIMUM SNOWFALL

Eagle Rock	34.0
Hagerstown 1E	8.8
Finksburg	7.6

Approximately 2 out of every 3 residents in my neighborhood had significant tree damage. For the next day or so, tree limbs, power lines and even a couple of whole trees littered streets and yards."

Thunderstorm

A strong cold front moved through the region on the afternoon of the 18th. It became stronger as it moved northeast. Winds peaked out at 61 MPH at Wilmington NWS. In Wilmington over 100 mature trees were toppled in the Wilmington State Park (formally Brandywine Park). Straight-line winds, not a tornado caused the damage.

FOR MORE INFORMATION
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OBSERVER COMMENTS FOR JANUARY 1999

Dan Hanson of Millersville 1 SE

January started cold but quickly turned mild with frequent down-right warm spells. This was the first month since last spring that the precipitation was above average.

14th-15th: A significant ice storm affected the station. Damage was limited to small to moderate tree limbs.

Al Kreinik of Parkton 5 SW

2nd: Light AM snow, moderate at 11AM for 15 minutes. Evening sleet and freezing drizzle

3rd: Freezing rain early AM becoming heavy rain 4:30AM

13th: FROPA drops temps from 57 @ 2:30PM to 30 by 9:30PM.

14th: Sleet and freezing rain total depth 0.8"

15th: AM freezing rain, heavy sleet & snow @ 11AM for 15 minutes. Glaze on trees.

Marty Sharrow of Owings Mills

A wintry start including a major ice storm 14th-15th

Herb Close of Manchester 1 SW

14th-15th: Major ice storm Power out for 30 hours at Parents house 2NW of Finksburg.

Ralph Hartsock of Westminster 4 SSE

18th: Rain, moderate to heavy, some thunder.

Bobby Miller of Millers 4 ENE

18th: Occasional rain showers, heavy fog zero visibility early then thunder at 1:08PM. Thunder and heavy rain at 1:20PM. Some sleet observed at 4PM

24th: Occasional moderate to heavy rain showers. Streams and rivers to near full or slightly over bankfull for the 3rd time this month. No major problems. Average temperature 1st - 16th 25.5 degrees Average temperature 17th - 31st 41.2 degrees.

Rob Rickell of Union Mills 2 SE

18th: Thunder, sleet, and damaging winds.

Paul Schlosser of Kingsville 1 S

Despite early cold, temperatures averaged 4.2 degrees above normal. Precip 2.94" above normal.

14th-15th: Heavy ice storm 1/2 to 3/4" ice.

Rich Giannola of Olney

14th-15th: Major ice storm. ZL and some ZR on and off all day on the 14th. Steadier ZR began ~4PM At 4:30PM ZR @ 29 deg, at 5:30PM ZR @ 29. At 8:45PM ZR @ 31 deg. ZR continued through the night into 15th. At 4:30AM, ZR+ @31 deg. Heavy

blowing and lighting the sky. Branches from nearby large trees were heard cracking. In morning, large branches and some power lines were down. Power was out in many portions of the neighborhood. Precipitation changed to show ~ 8:40AM before ending ~9:30AM. At least 1/2" ice was observed on surface, occasionally a little more. Flurries briefly ~1:10PM.

Kevin Shaw of Gaithersburg 2 WNW

3rd: 1.49" set daily precip record. 3rd ever wettest Jan day in station history.

14th: Ice storm and beginning of a 40 hour power outage

23rd: 69 deg daily record and 1 deg shy of Jan record.

Joe Terry of Forest Glen

3rd: With temperatures hovering around 20 degrees, freezing drizzle began falling (1900), coating everything immediately. Significant icing was cut short, however, by an extraordinary 20 degree rise in temperature in 4 hours during the middle of the night, quickly changing the precip to rain shortly after midnight.

4th: Strong cold front dropped the temperature 17 degrees in one hour just before dawn.

Gary Gallaher of Bear 2 SW

18th: Frontal passage with strong thunderstorms and high winds passed through late in the afternoon. Peak wind gust of 55 here, and 61mph at Wilmington NWS. Nearly 100 mature trees toppled in Wilmington State Park. Small tornado north in south Philadelphia, and Cherry Hill NJ. Another possible over the Delaware River north of Wilmington.

A drought warning, which almost became a drought emergency, in the Delaware River Basin was lifted at months end.

31st: High barometric reading of 30.88".

Bill Hudelson of South Bowie

18th: Thunderstorm with heavy rain 1330 hours.

31st: Lunar halo 1900 hours.

Floyd Abell of Hollywood

28th: Considerable clouds. 71 deg a daily record high

Marlene Walchli of California 3 NW

5rd: 28 coldest max of month. Crystal clear, unlimited visibility all day!

John Zyla of Ridge

28th: 72 degrees Warmest Jan since 1995.

Greg Keefer of Hagerstown 1 E

January was the third wettest, 6.39", in history.