

#### MEASURING SNOW



- Snowfall measurement is typically more difficult than rainfall
- Snowfall
   measurement takes
   a little more time

Accurate and timely snowfall measurements can be <u>extremely</u> important to your local National Weather Service office, public works departments, media outlets, climatologists, and other scientists.





- 4" Diameter CoCoRaHS Rain Gauge
  - Outer Cylinder for winter weather



- Snow measuring board
  - 16"x16"piece of ½ or ¾"plywood painted white





- Snow ruler or Yardstick
  - Measure in 10<sup>th's</sup> of an inch







- CoCoRaHS "Snow-Swatter" and spatula
  - Helps with taking core samples

#### WHERE TO MEASURE

- Before it snows, put your snow measuring board outside.
- Your snow measuring board should be on the ground in an area not subject to drifting



#### WHERE TO MEASURE





 It's a good idea to mark the location of your snow board with a flag or reflector



#### IF SNOW IS ANTICIPATED . . .





Remove the funnel AND inner tube, otherwise snow will clog the funnel

#### TAKING MEASUREMENTS OF SNOW







### THE FOUR COCORAHS SNOW MEASUREMENTS ARE:

- 1. The depth of new snow (new snowfall)
- 2. Liquid water equivalent of new snow (either in the gauge or on the snowboard)
- 3. The total depth of new snow <u>and</u> old snow and ice at observation time
- 4. Snow Water Equivalent (SWE) of total snow on the ground (optional)



#### DEPTH OF NEW SNOW

- 1. The <u>depth</u> of new snow (new snowfall)
- 2. Liquid water equivalent of new snow (either in the gauge or on the snowboard)
- 3. The total depth of new snow <u>and</u> old snow and ice at observation time
- 4. Snow Water Equivalent (SWE) of total snow on the ground (optional)

### MEASURING THE DEPTH OF NEW SNOWFALL





#### WHAT IS SNOWFALL?







Snowfall is the accumulation of new snow and ice in the past 24 hours prior to melting or settling.

#### THE 10:1 MYTH

Do NOT estimate snowfall by converting the liquid in your rain gage to a snowfall amount!

- The adage that "one inch of rain equals 10 inches of snow" is a myth!
- The snow/water equivalent ratio is dependent on many factors, not just surface air temperature.
- Snow to water ratios can vary from 8:1 or less to 20:1 or more!

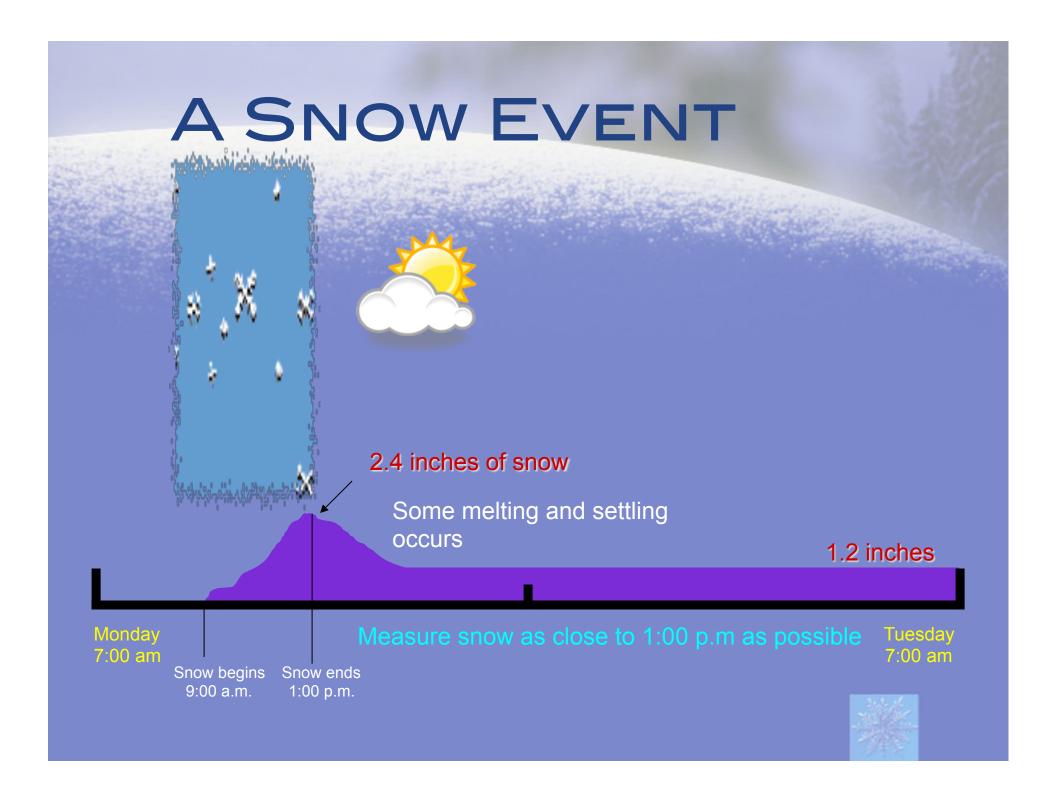
### WHEN TO MEASURE NEW SNOW

- Measure new snowfall as soon as possible after it ends, before settling and melting occur.
- This often will not be at your regular observation time.

Note that we never measure the depth of the snow in the rain gauge itself. Any frozen precipitation in the rain gauge must first be melted, then measured.







### WHERE TO MEASURE NEW SNOWFALL

- 1. Find a nice, level place to measure where drifting or melting has not occurred (like a snow board).
- 2. Slide your snow ruler into snow until it reaches the ground/board surface.
- 3. Read value on snow ruler (value is always to nearest tenth of an inch, like 3.4 inches).
- 4. If using snowboard, sweep it clean after taking a snow core. Place the board on top of the new snow.





#### SNOW MEASURED UNDER A TREE





Notice that only 3.0 inches of snow has accumulated here



### SNOW MEASURED IN THE OPEN





Whereas 6.5 inches has fallen in the open



#### ANGLE OF MEASUREMENT





Measure at eye level, as an angle will give you an inaccurate measurement



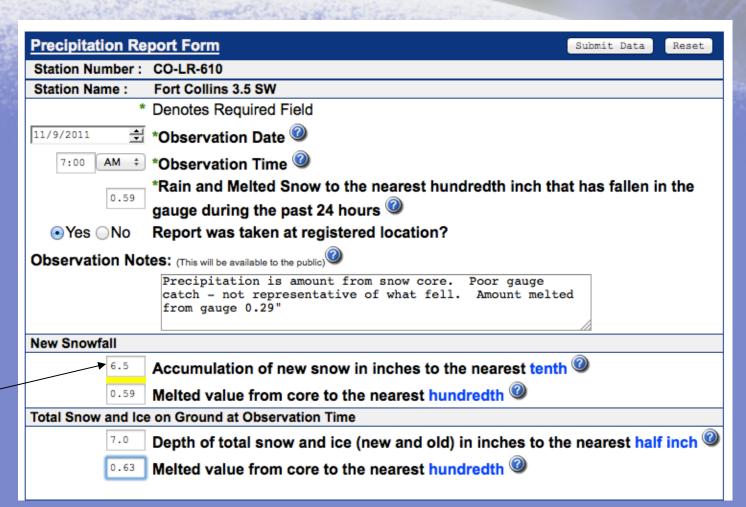
#### REPLACE THE BOARD





After you have measured the snow on your board and taken a core sample, clean it off and replace it on top of the newly fallen snow. Be sure to mark its location. Now you are ready for the next snowstorm.

#### REPORTING THE DEPTH OF NEW SNOW

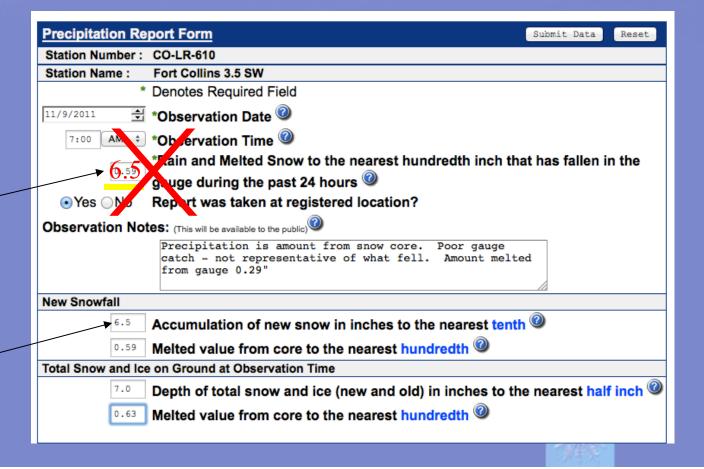


Report your measurement of new snowfall to the nearest tenth of an inch

# IMPORTANT! PLEASE DO NOT PUT YOUR SNOWFALL AMOUNT IN THE 'RAIN AND MELTED SNOW' BOX !!!!

Don't be tempted to put your snowfall — amount here! It's a common mistake.

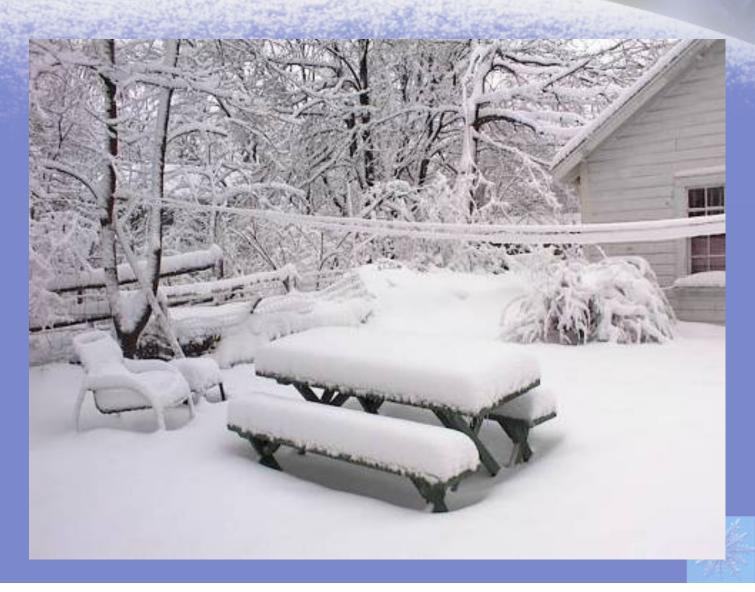
It should go here instead.



### LIQUID WATER EQUIVALENT OF NEW SNOW

- 1. The depth of new snow (new snowfall)
- 2. Liquid water equivalent of new snow (either in the gauge or on the snowboard)
- 3. The total depth of new snow <u>and</u> old snow and ice at observation time
- 4. Snow Water Equivalent (SWE) of total snow on the ground (optional)

### MEASURING THE WATER EQUIVALENT OF NEW SNOW



## 1. MEASURING SNOW WATER CONTENT OF WHAT FELL IN THE GAUGE



### YOU MAY HAVE AN ACCUMULATION OF SNOW ON THE RIM OF YOUR GAUGE



### HOW DO I KNOW WHAT TO MEASURE AND WHAT NOT TO??





Take your snow-swatter and tap gently on the rim of the gauge

### WHAT FALLS IN THE GAUGE WE MEASURE

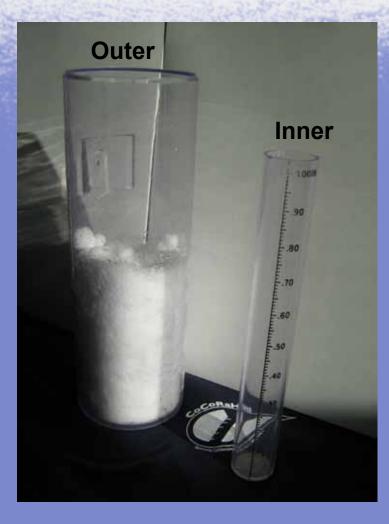


We will disregard the snow that lands outside the gauge.



Go ahead and clear away the snow from the gauge

#### MELTING SNOWFALL



Notice that you have two cylinders



Add some warm water to the inner cylinder

### CAREFULLY MEASURE YOUR TAP WATER BEFORE ADDING TO OUTER CYLINDER



Be sure to measure to nearest hundredth of an inch



### ADD THE WARM WATER TO THE SNOW SAMPLE



Pour water directly into sample



Allow sample to completely melt

### MEASURE THE LIQUEFIED SNOWFALL SAMPLE



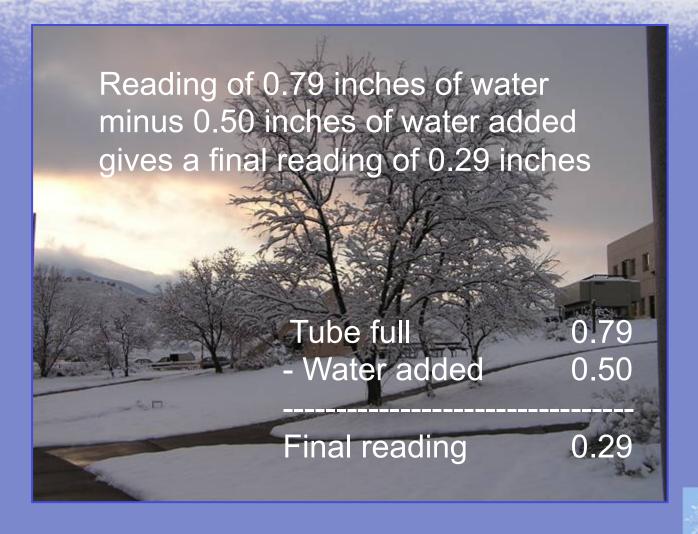
Pour snow sample into smaller tube



Remember "Every drop counts!"



## REMEMBER TO SUBTRACT THE AMOUNT OF WARM WATER THAT YOU'VE ADDED TO THE TUBE



# THE GAUGE MAY NOT ALWAYS GIVE AN ACCURATE MEASURE OF SNOW WATER CONTENT IN NEW SNOW... IT MAY BE NECESSARY TO TAKE A SNOW CORE SAMPLE OFF YOUR SNOWBOARD







## 2. WATER CONTENT FROM A SNOW CORE OF NEW SNOW

- Use your snow board or other hard surface.
- Take core after you have measured snow depth, but before you have cleared the board or surface of snow.
- For example, if you determined the total depth of the new snow is 4 inches, then take your core sample from an area where the depth of new snow is 4 inches.

### TAKING A SNOW CORE OF NEW SNOW

Capture a core by inverting the outer cylinder and pushing straight down into the snow





Use something thin and sturdy to slide under the cylinder (spatula, snow swatter)



# TAKING A SNOW CORE OF NEW SNOW

Like in the previous example melt and measure the snow





## REPORTING LIQUID WATER EQUIVALENT OF NEW SNOW

**Precipitation Report Form** Submit Data Reset Station Number: CO-LR-610 Station Name : Fort Collins 3.5 SW \* Denotes Required Field 🕏 \*Observation Date 🥝 11/9/2011 AM \* \*Observation Time \*Rain and Melted Snow to the nearest hundredth inch that has fallen in the gauge during the past 24 hours Report was taken at registered location? Yes ○No Observation Notes: (This will be available to the public) Precipitation is amount from snow core. Poor gauge catch - not representative of what fell. Amount melted from gauge 0.29" New Snowfall Accumulation of new snow in inches to the nearest tenth 6.5 Melted value from core to the nearest hundredth Total Snow and Ice on Ground at Observation Time Depth of total snow and ice (new and old) in inches to the nearest half inch Melted value from core to the nearest hundredth

Water melted from core is reported as the daily precipitation

Include amount melted from gauge in comments

# TOTAL DEPTH OF NEW AND OLD SNOW

- 1. The depth of new snow (new snowfall)
- 2. Liquid water equivalent of new snow (either in the gauge or on the snowboard)
- 3. The <u>total depth</u> of new snow <u>and</u> old snow and ice at observation time
- 4. Snow Water Equivalent (SWE) of total snow on the ground (optional)

# MEASURING THE TOTAL DEPTH OF SNOW ON THE GROUND







### MEASURING TOTAL SNOW ON THE GROUND

- Snow is rarely uniform in coverage, so take several measurements and average them to obtain your total depth of snow.
- Slide snow ruler through all layers of snow (new and old).
- Read value on snow ruler and record (values are to the nearest ½" like 4.5" or 5.0").
- Don't measure "artificial accumulations", such as plowed piles, large drifts, or shoveled snow.



### SNOW ON THE GROUND





If half the ground has 2.0" and half the ground is bare, report 1.0" as your total depth.

If more than half the ground is bare report "T" (trace) and mention the range of depths in your comments.

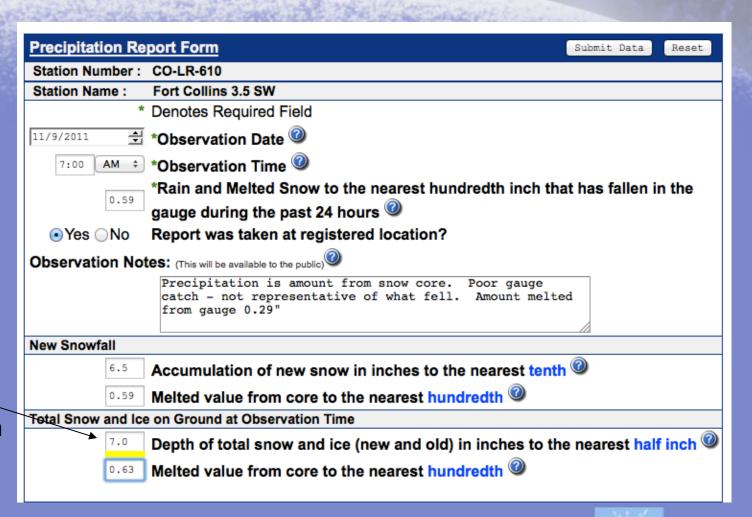
### IF POSSIBLE



Please report
"Total Snow Depth"
EVERY day that there is any snow on the ground!



## REPORTING TOTAL DEPTH OF OLD AND NEW SNOW



Report the total depth to the \_\_\_\_ nearest half inch

# SNOW WATER EQUIVALENT

- 1. The depth of new snow (new snowfall)
- 2. Liquid water equivalent of new snow (either in the gauge or on the snowboard)
- 3. The total depth of new snow <u>and</u> old snow and ice at observation time
- 4. Snow Water Equivalent (SWE) of total snow on the ground (optional)

# MEASURING SNOW WATER EQUIVALENT (SWE)

In parts of the nation where snow stays on the ground for a long period of time we ask our volunteers to take a SWE measurement only once a week. Monday seems to be a good day to do so!

#### **SWE MONDAYS**

What's your Snow Water Equivalent ?
Report the water content of your "snow on the ground" each Monday

- This is a measurement that is useful to hydrologists and river forecasters.
- It provides an estimate of how much water is "on the ground" that can potentially run off into rivers and streams.

### SOMETIMES SNOW ON THE GROUND CAN BE VERY DEEP









"Measure what you feel comfortable with"

### HOW TO MEASURE "SWE"

 Take a "core sample" from the snow on the ground (not on your snow board).

Melt the core sample

Measure the amount of water in the core



## FIRST FIND A REPRESENTATIVE LOCATION

- The location should have not drifted, melted, or blown clear
- For example, if you
   determined the total depth of
   the snow is 7 inches, then
   take your core sample from
   an area where the depth of
   snow is seven inches



## STEPS TO CUTTING A CORE SAMPLE



Place gauge upside down and push down into the snow



Clear snow from around the gauge

### CAPTURING THE CORE



Slide snow-swatter (spatula works, too) under gauge



Carefully lift and get ready to flip the gauge



Bring the sample inside to melt



#### SNOW CORES IN DEEPER SNOW









## IN WETTER SNOW, THE CORE WILL COME OUT IN ONE PIECE









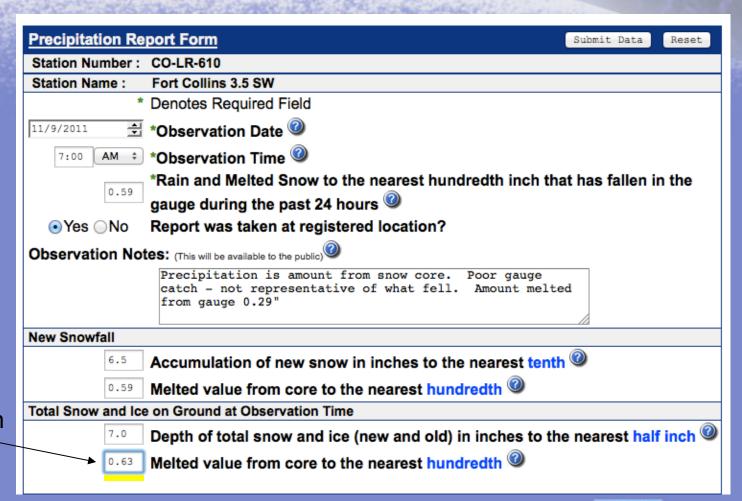
### SNOW WATER EQUIVALENT (SWE)

- Melt and measure
- Report this on yourDaily Report form





#### REPORTING SWE

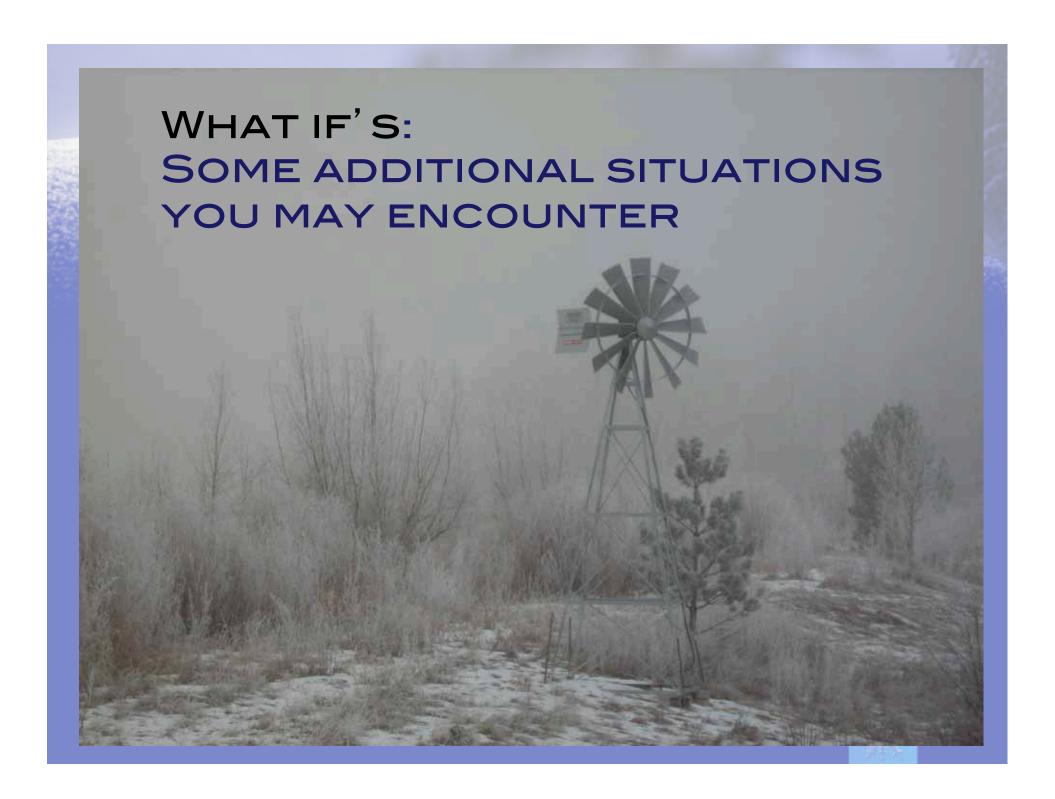


Report the melted value to the nearest hundredth



# WINDY CONDITIONS MAY CREATE A SITUATION WHERE THE AMOUNT OF SNOW IN THE GAUGE IS NOT REPRESENTATIVE OF WHAT FELL ON THE GROUND.

- In this case, we need to take a "core sample" from the snowboard or an area representative of the average new snow depth.
  - Melt and measure the core sample.
- If you feel this is more representative of the actual precipitation, then report this amount as your Daily Precipitation and make a note in the comments.
   Include the melted amount from the snow that actually fell in the gauge in your comments.



# WHAT IF'S: THERE'S VERY HEAVY SNOW FALLING. CAN I LET SOMEONE KNOW?

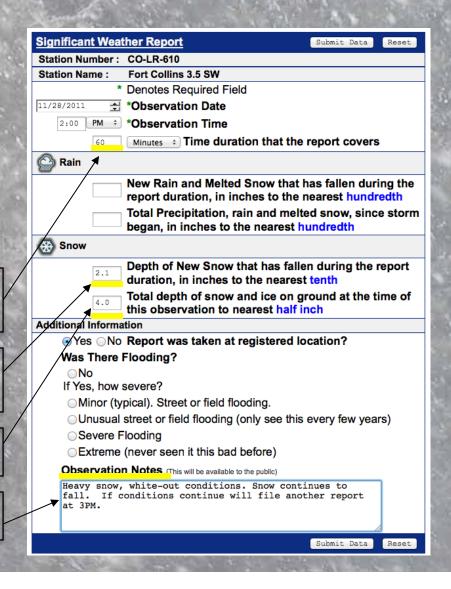
Indeed! File a "Significant Weather Report" at any time.
This report goes directly to the National Weather Service in 'real-time' and helps out greatly.

Report the time duration that the report covers

Indicate the depth of the new snow that has fallen during this time

List the depth of the total snow on the ground

Add notes to paint a fuller picture.



### WHAT IF: SNOW MELTS AS IT LANDS AND NEVER ACCUMULATES

- Report the precipitation in your gauge (melted) as the Daily Precipitation
- Report a Trace of new snow
- In your comments write: "Snow melted as it landed"





#### WHAT IF: I TAKE MY SNOW MEASUREMENT, BUT DON'T HAVE TIME TO MELT THE CORE ON MY WAY OUT THE DOOR?



Put NA in the 'Rain and Melted Snow' box, as well as the melted core boxes and add an observation note



My Data Entry: Daily Precipitation Report Form **Precipitation Report Form** Station Number: CO-LR-610 Station Name : Fort Collins 3.5 SW \* Denotes Required Field 11/29/2011 \*Observation Date 7:00 AM + \*Observation Time \*Rain and Melted Snow to the nearest hundredth inch that has fallen in the gauge during the past 24 hours Report was taken at registered location? Observation Notes: (This will be available to the public) Core measurement has been taken. Is currently melting and we will report it shortly. New Snowfall Accumulation of new snow in inches to the nearest tenth Melted value from core to the nearest hundredth Total Snow and Ice on Ground at Observation Time Depth of total snow and ice (new and old) in inches to the nearest half inch Melted value from core to the nearest hundredth

When you come back later, go to edit and put the liquid amount in the 'Rain and Melted Snow' box, as well as the 'Melted Core' box.

#### HOW DO I MEASURE FREEZING RAIN?



"Freezing rain" is rain that falls in liquid form but freezes on contact with a surface.

Do <u>NOT</u> report freezing rain as "Snow". Melt and measure the moisture that has accumulated <u>inside</u> your gauge and report that as your daily precipitation amount.

Report ZERO for your new snow amount (assuming that it all fell as rain, and no sleet or snow fell or accumulated).

Report the total depth of freezing rain remaining on the ground at time of observation and enter that in the "Total Snow on Ground" column. Make a note in your comments section so that we know it's freezing rain.

#### SNOW MEASUREMENT REVIEW

New Snowfall

Melt any snow/ice in your rain gauge, and report this as your daily precipitation

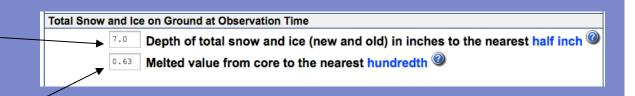
Measure the accumulation of new snow on your snowboard

Take a core from your snowboard, melt and report in the "New Snowfall" section. (optional)

Measure the total snow on the ground (new snow plus old snow and ice).

Report the water equivalent of total snow on the ground (SWE). (once a week if possible)





Accumulation of new snow in inches to the nearest tenth

Melted value from core to the nearest hundredth

#### **SNOW ZEROS**

There's no zero's like 'snow zeros'!

If you are in the winter season and you have not had new snow in the past 24 hours, please fill in those 'snow zeros'!

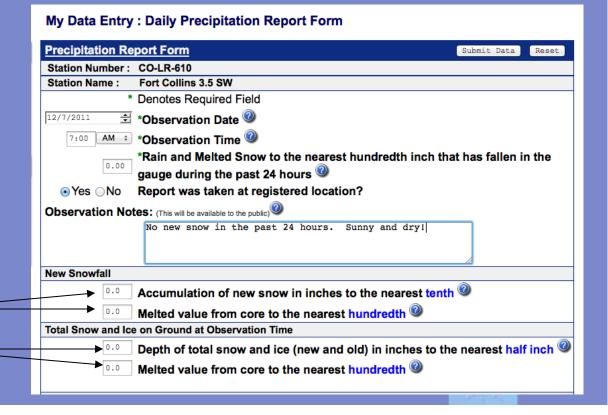
Here are three cases

#### Case number one:

- No new snowfall
- No snow currently on the ground

0.0

().()



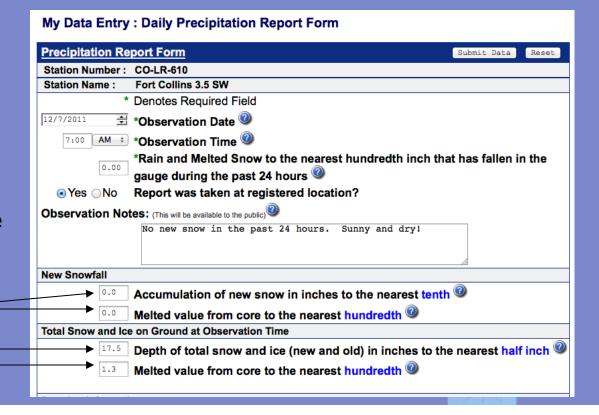
#### **SNOW ZEROS**

There's no zero's like 'snow zeros'!

#### Case number two:

- No new snowfall
- Snow already on ground
- You have taken a snow core of the snow on the ground

(),()



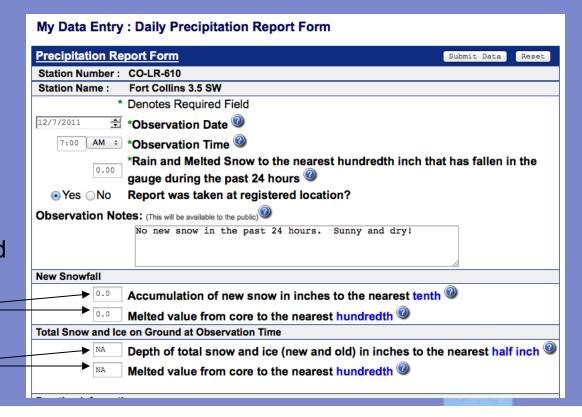
#### **SNOW ZEROS**

#### There's no zero's like 'snow zeros'!

#### Case number three:

- No new snowfall
- Snow already on ground
- You have not taken a snow core of the snow on the ground

(),()



#### ADDITIONAL WINTER TRAINING



Click here









