

New Mexico CoCoRaHS News

Do You Know How to Measure Snowfall?

A review of winter reporting procedures

Snow is already falling in in New Mexico. Experienced volunteers have been entering data on snow accumulation, but new volunteers or volunteers in areas with little snowfall may need a refresher on how exactly to measure snowfall.

The procedure for measuring snowfall is different than the one for measuring rain, and it requires a little more of your time. There are three types of numbers to enter on your daily precipitation report when it snows: snow water equivalent, new snowfall, and total snow and ice. Remove the inner cylinder and the cap of your rain gauge to gather the snow. To get the number for snow water equivalent, you'll need to melt the snow that has accumulated in the gauge over the last 24 hours (you can add warm water to melt it, but remember to subtract the amount you added to get the total snow water equivalent).

The other two numbers you enter are new snow accumulation and total snow and ice on the ground. A snow board (a flat, white board, ideally 16 x 16") is useful but not necessary to get an accurate reading for snowfall. Just make sure you take the measurement at a place that is flat and level where snow accumulates uniformly and doesn't melt quickly. You'll need to use a ruler to measure these amounts. Report to the nearest one-tenth (0.1") inch. The new snow measurement is all of the snow that has fallen in the day before you report. If it stops snowing sometime on the day before your report, measure at that time if possible, as the snow may shift and melt before the usual 7am reporting time.



Photos on this page submitted by CoCoRaHS volunteers. Top photo by Ken Hall in Las Cruces. Bottom photo by Jay Hoehn of Mule Creek.

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Photo by Wayne Sleep



Photo by Jan Curtis

Do you know how to measure snowfall? continued...

The number you want to report for new snow is the number you get right after the snow finishes falling. The last number you want to report is simply the total number of new and old snow and ice on the ground at your usual reporting time.

More in-depth training on measuring snowfall is available on the main page of the CoCoRaHS website.

Look under the “Resources” section on the left hand menu of the main page. Click on the “FAQ/Help” link for detailed written instructions. You can also view a video on this page.

You can also click the “Training Slide Shows” link on the home page for detailed instructions with pictures.

Interesting Facts

372 Number of CoCoRaHS observer stations that made reports in December 2012.

10 in Height of snow on the ground on December 20, 2012, reported by the two stations in Angel Fire in Colfax County

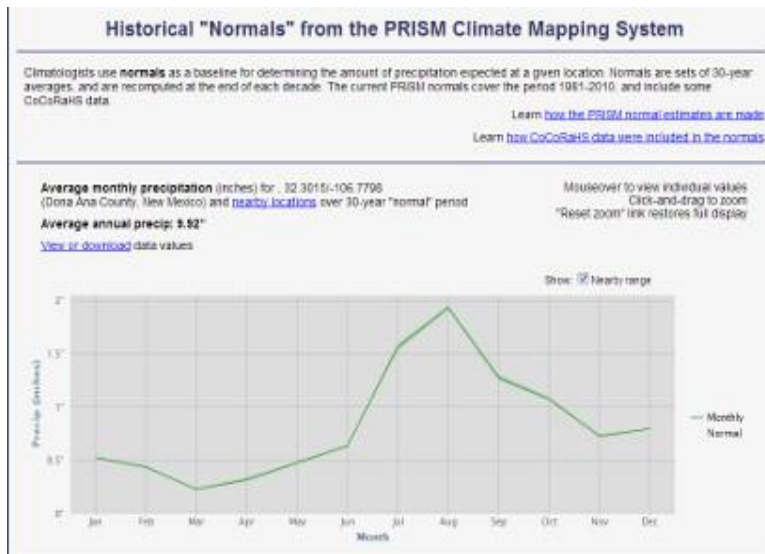
220 Number of CoCoRaHS stations in New Mexico reporting on January 1, 2013; of these, **109** showed a trace or more of precipitation

CoCoRaHS Coordinators for New Mexico

Depending on who recruited you and helped set you up as a CoCoRaHS volunteer, you have heard the names of various coordinators, but do you know the levels of coordinators? There are three levels: the state coordinator (Dave DuBois), the regional coordinators (who cover three regions in the state: Northern, Southeastern, and Southwestern), and then the county or local coordinators (many of our counties don't have a coordinator so some counties are bundled under one coordinator).

What are the CoCoRaHS regions for New Mexico? They correspond to the three different National Weather Service offices that service the state. The Albuquerque office covers the Northern part of the state, the El Paso office (out of Santa Teresa, NM) covers the Southwestern region of the state, and the Midland/Odessa office covers the Southeastern part of the state. Each of these three regions has one or two coordinators. Then the counties within the regions may have their own coordinators.

What do the coordinators do? The state coordinator recruits new members, organizes outreach events and publications. The regional coordinators also recruit new members and set up training events. They work closely with the county or local coordinators, who assist with training and with finding venues for meetings and events. County and local coordinators are especially helpful to residents living in areas of New Mexico far from the regional weather service offices. They may also be easier to contact. To find out more information on the New Mexico coordinators and to see who your coordinators are, go to the CoCoRaHS website, and click on the “Volunteer Coordinators” link under the “Resources” section on the left hand menu on the home page.



Take a Look at the PRISM-CoCoRaHS Portal

Have you taken a look at the PRISM data for your account yet? It's an engaging feature exclusively available to you as a CoCoRaHS volunteer. PRISM is a data analysis tool developed at Oregon State University. It will let you look up the normal precipitation amounts for your area so you can compare what you're currently getting to long-term patterns. Simply log into CoCoRaHS as usual and then click on "My Account" (right next to "My Data"). Scroll all the way to the bottom of your account page and click on "PRISM data." This will take you a page that will show you a graph of 30 year normals for precipitation in your area. You can also change the graph around to see the yearly and monthly averages going back to 1895.

The PRISM model uses data from a variety of networks, including the National Weather Service COOP stations, mountain SNOTEL stations and other regional and local networks. The PRISM team has recently began to incorporate CoCoRaHS data going back to January 2011 into their model. Where they don't have station data for an area, they use modeled data.

To learn more, you can read the PRISM Portal guide or watch a narrated version of it on the CoCoRaHS website. You can access it through the "about PRISM Portal" link under "My Account."

Have you taken any pictures of interesting weather in your area? Maybe you've captured a peaceful snowfall or a towering storm. If so, we'd like to see them. We received a few volunteer pictures last summer, but we'd like to see pictures of winter in New Mexico. If you would like to share your photos, please send them to cocorahs@nmsu.edu. We'd like to put them on the climate center website.



Comment Spotlight

Some of the interesting comments entered by New Mexico observers on the CoCoRaHS site.

Winds over 50 kts yesterday. Blowing dust was epic. Dust drifts to 6" in the fallow farm fields. Less precipitation here than in the 1930's dust bowl era. --
Comment from the Tucumcari 4.7 NNW station on 12/20/2012

Snow stopped before about 2000 when the moon was shining brightly on the crest of the new fallen snow. --
Comment from Angel Fire 10. 2 SSE on 12/20/2012

Very interesting weather-strong SSW wind blowing tumbleweeds everywhere. Fast moving rain. --
Comment from Portales 8.4 ESE on 12/15/2012

Calm and totally overcast, currently snowing, but with the world's tiniest snowflakes. --
Comment from Placitas 3.8 ENE on 12/15/2012

7am light, bead-like snow most of the morning, a few flurries toward evening. Stopped sometime in the late night. Amazing that it was the same amount as yesterday. --
Comment from Silver City 4.4N on 1/1/2013

NM CoCoRaHS

cocorahs@nmsu.edu

"Because every drop counts"

Find us on the Web:

cocorahs.org

Upcoming Events

January 17, 2013: State coordinator Dr. Dave DuBois will be offering training on winter weather measuring procedures from 7 to 8:30 pm at the Santa Fe County Fairgrounds, 3229 Rodeo Rd, Santa Fe. Email cocorahs@nmsu.edu to RSVP or for more information.

February 5, 2013: Training for the SKYWARN program in Rio Rancho provided by the National Weather Service will include CoCoRaHS information. Contact Albuquerque coordinator Kerry Jones at kerry.jones@noaa.gov for more information.

February 7, 2013: Dr. Dubois will present on CoCoRaHS as part of the City of Las Cruces' Lush and Lean Program.

March 28, 2013: Training for the SKYWARN program in Rio Rancho provided by the National Weather Service will include CoCoRaHS information. Contact Albuquerque coordinator Kerry Jones at kerry.jones@noaa.gov for more information

April 25, 2013: The Las Cruces Water Festival for children in grades 3 and 4 at Young Park, 1905 E. Nevada Ave., Las Cruces.

CoCoRaHS Happenings in the Albuquerque Region

Terry Jones is one of the five CoCoRaHS regional coordinators for New Mexico. He and Mark Fettig coordinate for the Northern region of the state (including Albuquerque and the northern 2/3 of the state). They work for the National Weather Service and volunteer as regional coordinators for CoCoRaHS. Jones has been an observer since 2006 and a regional coordinator since 2009. He agreed to discuss what has been happening with CoCoRaHS in the Northern part of the state.

Jones and Fettig have been working to steadily increase the numbers of CoCoRaHS volunteers in their region. Jones estimates that there have been a dozen new recruits in the last month. He has switched to a year-round recruitment approach since people are excited about CoCoRaHS when they hear about it, but they sometimes need the extra push to get them involved in the parts of the year that have few precipitation events. His office has begun incorporating CoCoRaHS training into the presentations they do for the SKYWARN program that trains citizens to be storm spotters. In addition, they're working on converting some of the stations in the long-standing precipitation network Albuquerque Metropolitan Arroyo and Flood Control Authority to CoCoRaHS observer stations. The Center Weather Service Unit in Albuquerque (which monitors the weather for air traffic in the Albuquerque air space) is now officially CoCoRaHS.

The regional coordinators are working on creating a joint webinar to provide a general overview of CoCoRaHS and to get people knowing about it and interested in it. This webinar should be coming out in early February. It will be another tool to expand the CoCoRaHS network in New Mexico. With the work of Jones, Fettig and the other regional coordinators, New Mexico CoCoRaHS is going strong.

