

## **LOOK EAST TO SEE SOME SNOW**

FORT COLLINS, CO — Friday, February 10, 2006

### **Weather for the weekend -- look east for snow.**

When we started CoCoRaHS in northern Colorado a few years ago it was for the purpose of observing the localized intense rainfall patterns from thunderstorms. We weren't even thinking about snow -- let alone having CoCoRaHS volunteers almost as far east as the Atlantic Ocean helping take measurements. Things have changed and now we have observers like you equipped with "all-weather precipitation gauges" spread from the Grand Tetons of Wyoming to the Great Lakes snow belt of Indiana and eastward to the Appalachian Mountains of Pennsylvania. We even have a few volunteers close to the tracks of the famous "Nor'easters" of the East Coast.

This is a big country, and what that means is that with so many volunteers in so many places, our network catches some snow nearly every day. I just ran a "Rainy Days Report" from the "View Data" menu of the CoCoRaHS website and there have only been 6 days since Halloween where it did NOT snow at a single one of our stations. Christmas day was one of those. Today, over 425 of us reported snow, and we've had a few days with over 600 snow reports.

Measuring snow and its water content can be a good challenge, so I used to send out reminders before each storm giving instructions on how to make sure your gauge was out and ready for snow (remove the funnel and only leave the large outer cylinder outside to collect snow) and how to measure and melt the snow accumulating in the gauge. We would also talk about measuring the accumulation of fresh snowfall -- reporting the maximum accumulation during the day, if possible, prior to melting and settling. We would also send out frequent reminders of how to take several measurements of the total depth of snow on ground in order to come up with a reasonable average for your 7 AM report of "Total Depth on ground". We would talk about how our gauges, as nice as they are, sometimes don't catch all the snow that falls. Sometimes the snow piles up on the rim of the gauge and it's not obvious what should be measured and what should be cleared away. Sometimes it is best to take a core sample of the fresh snow and melt that? This is fun, or frustrating, depending on your point of view.

(By the way, the quick snow we got last night left 1.7" on my snowboard when I measured last night at 9 PM, but at 7 AM today, it had already settled to just 1.3". Therefore I reported 1.7" for my daily snowfall but the depth was just 1.3" -- normally rounded to the nearest whole or half inch.

Now with so many volunteers in so many states, it doesn't seem right to send out snow measurement reminders before each storm. For most of us, this will be an annoyance. But reviewing instructions is always helpful. Instructions were provided in your training packet, if you got one, and are on the CoCoRaHS website. There is a training video available for free download when you click the "Snow" button on "Things to know, about rain, hail and snow". I recommend it -- but you need high speed internet or you'll be downloading for hours.

### **Winter Storm Watch**

Forecasters and snow lovers are on the edge of their seats tonight back east. Right now, some of our new volunteers from PA, MD and VA are under a National Weather Service winter storm watch in anticipation of a possible major snowstorm Saturday night. This may be their biggest "test" since signing up for CoCoRaHS. For those of you in range of this storm, please do your best Sunday morning, as all eyes will be on your observations :-)

### **Welcome, Indiana and Missouri:**

We are getting a stream of applications from our two newest states -- Indiana and Missouri -- and some data are already showing up on the maps each morning. Good job!! This week, Oklahoma confirmed that they will be joining later this spring. Soon we will be able to follow our storms from the Rockies to the East Coast. This is cool!

### **Preparing for Hail Season**

On a totally different subject, we need to talk soon about measuring and reporting hail -- and the importance of your reports. In a day or two, I will send out a hail message, including an invitation to our first-ever "1000 hail pad party and fundraiser" scheduled for February 25th. If you live close to Fort Collins and want to be involved in a unique volunteer activity, please plan to join us that morning. We will need MANY helpers. Details coming soon!

Best wishes,

*Nolan*