

WESTERN OBSERVERS—PREPARE FOR SNOW

FORT COLLINS, CO — Tuesday, February 14, 2006

CoCoRaHS Rain, Hail and Snow Observers

About 100 new CoCoRaHS observers from Maryland, eastern Virginia and eastern Pennsylvania fought their way through their first big snow of the year this past weekend and did a dandy job getting reports sent in.

It's not easy measuring snow, especially when the gauge is full to the top. (Remember, during heavy snow you may need to check and empty your gauge more than once a day to make sure it doesn't cap over. It is even a bigger problem for very wet, sticky snow.) We had some observers report 4" of new snow in just one hour's time early Sunday AM with lightning and thunder. Wowzers! Some areas had a foot of new snow in only 6 hours. Now that's SNOW!

Total Depth of Snow on Ground

It has been very informative watching the reports of total depth of snow on the ground. Maryland stations hit hard by the Saturday-night storm now are showing 6-8" of snow remaining on the ground. It hasn't lost much of its water content (take a core sample to see for yourself) but it settled quickly during the first 24 hours and is now a firm and water-laden snowpack.

Remember, one of the maps we produce each day are maps of total depth of snow on ground -- which includes new and old snow. Remember to measure and report this depth if possible, even on days when no new snow has fallen. The computer defaults to "NA" which will NOT plot a value on our maps. So go ahead and type in the observed value -- including 0.0 when the ground is bare or T when there's just a trace and then your report will appear on the maps. It is extremely interesting and useful to watch the changes in the snowpack. Your observations are GREATLY APPRECIATED.

New Storm!

Now a winter storm watch has been issued for parts of Wyoming and Nebraska starting tonight. Chugwater and Wheatland, WY could be buried soon :-)
Several inches of cold "upslope" snow are even in the forecast for Fort Collins between now and midday Thursday. So now it's our turn to check to make sure our gauges are in place, our funnels and inner tubes are in a convenient location

indoors, our snow measurement boards are clean, level and in position (with a marker flag or some such to remind us where it is), and our rulers are ready. It's our turn, FINALLY!

The value of "Observation notes"

One of the extremely valuable services our volunteers are providing are personal notes and supplemental information about the daily weather. You can enter as much as you want -- temperatures, cloud conditions, thunder and lightning, local impacts, etc. etc. -- simply by typing on the text box labeled "Observation notes". You can keep your own weather journal there and it will be archived. After looking at the precipitation totals and snowfall amounts, the next thing I usually look at is the "Daily Comments Report" where I can read the notes and supplemental reports from many of you. That's where I learned of your intense hourly snowfall rates, lightning and thunder, broken tree limbs, reduced visibilities, etc. The notes from the weekend storm back east were excellent and painted an excellent word picture of what that part of the country was experiencing. We eventually plan to add a photo upload capability, too, so that if you get tired of describing the conditions in words, you can click a few photos as well.

While New Mexico hasn't had snow, thunder or any of that fun stuff to report, the remarks have been very informative there as well. I see a St. Valentine's weather rhyme in one of today's reports (you'll have to read that for yourself). There have also been remarks about clouds of dust, 100 consecutive days without precipitation, and other fun stuff like that.

Your "Observation Notes" are definitely APPRECIATED!

Hail Pad Party

Henry tells me that 25 people have already signed up for the February 25th "1000 Hail Pad Party" here in Fort Collins. EXCELLENT! We could still use more help as we need at least 40 people to reach our goal. We'll post results and share pictures later on.

Winter greetings and spring is now almost in sight—and then things get REALLY INTERESTING.

Regards,
Nolan