

The Catch

COCORAHS SNOW REPORTS—A FEW POINTERS

FORT COLLINS, CO — Sunday, December 3, 2006

Good morning! It's still cold here in northern Colorado—Zero Fahrenheit as I write with 4-5" of snow still remaining on the ground from our Tuesday night-Wednesday AM storm. There has been no melting yet except on the streets, but the snow is gradually settling.

Gracious -- this last storm was a battle of observational tenacity -- especially for some of you in Kansas, Oklahoma and Missouri—rain, freezing rain, gobs of sleet and finally snow! Reports of up to 17" of new snow were reported in central Missouri as the storm moved out on Friday AM. That is a LOT. The accumulations of sleet and freezing rain were equally impressive. Storm totals of water content (rain plus the water content of the freezing rain, sleet and snow) added up to 4-5" at many Missouri locations and even more in a few spots. That will take a nice bite out of their lingering drought conditions.

As for data quality, we did pretty well especially considering how many newcomers to snow and ice measurements we have. When only about 1/2 of our observers in Missouri were able to get their reports in due to treacherous conditions and power outages. Hopefully things are beginning to improve.

By the way, thanks to those of you who shared your pictures of your icy decorations on trees and buildings.

A few tips!

Here are a few tips and reminders. Your daily precipitation report consists of:

1) *Total precipitation for the last 24 hours.* This is the water content (rain plus any melted ice or snow) that accumulated in your gauge. If you had 3" of new snow, melt that snow before you report the precipitation.

2) Depth of new snow. This is the observed accumulation of snow AND SLEET that fell during the past 24 hours—prior to melting or settling. So if you had 4" of snow when it quit, but only 3" remains when you measure at 7 AM, then report 4.0" for your 24-hour total

3) Melted value from core. This is an optional but much appreciated measurement. Take a core sample at a representative location of the new snow (and sleet) that has accumulated in the past 24 hours. Melt the contents to get a water content. That's what you report. It can be very interesting AND INFORMATIVE TO US to see how the core measurement compares to what landed in the gauge. Depending on wind, temperature, melting, etc, the core value may be greater or less.

4) Depth of total snow. This is the total depth of snow and/or ice that remains on the ground at your scheduled observation time. Even if it has NOT SNOWED in the past 24 hours, still report this amount so we can tell how much snow cover you still have. The computer automatically fills out NA but go ahead and measure and enter the actual amount. If it is ZERO, enter 0.0 IT IS REALLY INTERESTING AFTER A STORM LIKE THIS, TO WATCH THE SNOW DEPTH GO DOWN AFTER THE STORM. PLEASE MAKE THIS MEASUREMENT IF YOU CAN.

5) Melted value of core sample of total depth of snow/ice on the ground. This is also an optional reading and it can be hard to impossible with our little plastic gauges if the snow is icy and stubborn. But if you are so inclined, take a core sample of the old snow remaining on the ground, melt it and get the water content. That number gives hydrologists a good idea of what water is still available to melt and runoff to add to ground water and river flow.

IF YOU'RE NOT SURE - -

Rather than entering a report that you are uncertain about, send us an e-mail with your question or concern. Better yet (so we're not inundated), contact your state or local coordinator who will be able to answer your questions as well. Since so many people and scientists are looking at CoCoRaHS data, we want our data to be as accurate as possible.

LOOK AT THE MAPS AND REPORTS - -

I highly recommend that you take a look at the data from other observers in your area (by clicking "Maps" or "View Data") so you can see how your reports compare to others. This way you can sometimes catch and correct errors before they get away from us.

OK, that's all for today—No time for stories.

But thanks very much for your hard work to measure this recent storm. It was a biggie. Winter is barely beginning, so there may be more.

Welcome newcomers.

Over the past week over 100 new observers have joined the CoCoRaHS network. I'm not sure if we've got you all on our mailing list yet, and most of you don't have rain gauges and training to get started yet. But *WELCOME ABOARD* and we look forward to having you on the CoCoRaHS team.

Sincerely,

Nolan Doesken

CoCoRaHS Chearleader and Colorado Climatologist Colorado State University