

The Catch

COCORAHS—WATCHING IT SNOW!

FORT COLLINS, CO — Monday, March 17, 2008

Good evening.

It's snowing -- very small flakes but plenty of them! For someone who was born fascinated by snow, this is great entertainment. I know it's no fun for those out driving or for anyone waiting for a loved one to arrive home. But for now, I'm not going anywhere and the family is settled. Watching the snowflakes in our backyard light, they are falling with a downward velocity of 4-5 feet per second. That's fast for snowflakes and it's indicative of very wet snow. The temperature is 32F. When I measured a few hours ago, we had 2.1" of snow on my snowboard but the water content was a whopping 0.35". Now we're up to over 3" of snow and over 0.50" of water. We've got a long way to go, but this is slightly reminiscent of our March 17-19th storm back in 2003 when we got 32" of snow with over 5" of water content. If it wasn't for all the broken trees and collapsed roofs -- and very sore backs from endless shoveling -- otherwise that was a great memory. Yes, you may think we only get dry, fluffy snows here in Colorado -- and in midwinter that is usually true. But when it snows here in the spring, all bets are off. We can snow as heavy and wet as anywhere in the country. Back in April 1921 a place called Silver Lake in the mountains just west of Boulder, Colorado got a whopping 90" of snow in less than 36 hours from a storm like this. That storm still holds some national records.

I realize that for many of you participating in CoCoRaHS your 2007-08 snow season is over or nearly over. Some of you don't even like snow -- imagine that. But here, at the base of the Front Range of the Colorado Rockies, March is often the snowiest month of the year. April brings snow as well, and occasionally we can get snow in May. I will never forget my first spring in Colorado. After months of dry weather, the skies opened in early May 1978 with over two feet of snow May 5-6. For a snow lover like me, that was awesome.

Hail Season has begun

These next few weeks as we ride the annual roller coaster from winter to summer, there will be storms -- bad storms, and worse storms. Most of us won't

get much, but a few will be pounded. I just checked our hail reports (see link below)

<http://www.cocorahs.org/ViewData/ListHailReports.aspx>

Already there have been 180 CoCoRaHS hail reports submitted this year and the hail season is just getting started. The largest stones observed so far this year by a CoCoRaHS volunteer were tennis ball sized -- down in Cherokee County, Texas. Ever since we started CoCoRaHS, we've had at least a few reports each year of tennis ball sized or greater. If you do get really big stones, I encourage you to take some pictures. Also, if you have the time and inclination, try cutting some in half to see the inside structure.

Remember, if you experience hail of any size or quantity, please submit a hail report using the CoCoRaHS "Hail Report Form"

<http://www.cocorahs.org/Admin/MyDataEntry/HailReport.aspx>

Your hail reports are immediately forwarded to the National Weather Service to help support their storm forecast and warning activities. Thanks for helping. Even if you don't get a storm report in right away, still use the hail report form to submit hail information. Comments about hail in your regular daily precipitation report are good, but they might not get included in our hail studies.

Storm study in Northern Texas!

If you live in the Dallas-Fort Worth area, or if you know people that do, then please help us out. We are collaborating with the Roofing Industry Committee on Weather Issues to document hail storms in the DFW area for the spring and summer of 2008. Hail pads are available via the North Texas American Meteorological Society or the offices of Haag Engineering. People who are not CoCoRaHS volunteers are still welcome to set out hail pads. If you have any questions about this project, please contact me.

That's all for now. Have a great week.

Nolan Doesken