

The Catch

COCORAHS – SNOW IS COMING

FORT COLLINS, CO — Thursday, October 9, 2008

Prepare for SNOW!!!

This message is an immediate warning to CoCoRaHS rain gauge volunteers in northern Wyoming and southern Montana. For the rest of us, this is just a good opportunity to start getting ready for winter.

There is a major snowstorm taking shape that could last for several days. I just checked the National Weather Service website for Billings, Montana. Here is a quote from this morning's weather discussion from that forecast office.

"MAJOR WINTER STORM WILL IMPACT THE AREA BEGINNING TONIGHT...AND LASTING THROUGH SUNDAY. DUE TO THE STRENGTH AND DURATION EXPECTED FROM THIS STORM...IT COULD TURN OUT TO BE A HISTORICAL SNOW PRODUCER BY THE TIME THINGS WIND DOWN SUNDAY NIGHT...ESPECIALLY ALONG THE NORTHEAST SLOPES OF THE MOUNTAINS."

Based on current forecasts, this storm could affect large areas of Montana, Wyoming and parts of South Dakota. First of all, if you are in or near this area or scheduled to be traveling there, please make appropriate preparations for your personal life. Early winter storms sometimes catch people by surprise. In October 1997 a ferocious blizzard hit here in Colorado. That was the only time in my life that I spent a night in a car along the side of a road with howling winds and zero visibility -- very frightening. Eight people here in Colorado ended up losing their lives from that storm -- and tens of thousands of cattle died. We aren't always ready for winter so early in the season, so impacts are sometimes more severe. This first major snowstorm of the year may not be that intense, but it is worth being prepared.

Secondly, prepare for measuring snow. If snow is anticipated, make sure that you remove the funnel and inner tube of your gauge and have them in a convenient location indoors where you can quickly find when you do your measurements.

Snow Measurement Instruction

I don't have time to give a snow measurement tutorial this morning. I recommend that you take a few minutes to review proper methods for measuring and reporting snow. You will need to learn or remember how to make accurate measurements of the precipitation (water content from melting the snow), the snowfall (the depth of new snow that falls each day -- which is the maximum accumulation of new snow in each 24-hour observing period prior to melting or settling), and the total depth of snow on ground (average depth at 7 AM of both new and old snow remaining on the ground at the time of your daily observation). Also, remember that your gauge will not always catch all the snow that falls especially if it is windy. It may be necessary, helpful, or at least very interesting to measure the water content from core samples of snow that has accumulated on the ground.

Training materials on how to measure snow are found on the CoCoRaHS website. We have written instructions:

<http://www.cocorahs.org/Content.aspx?page=snow>

In addition if you have high-speed internet access we have a training slide show and also a snow measurement training video that we prepared several years ago for the National Weather Service. Please view them when you have a few minutes.

Also, remember that you can use the "Intense Precipitation" report to send in information regarding heavy snow in progress. That report is used both for reporting heavy rain and snow. The National Weather Service offices have direct and immediate access to all reports of "Intense Precipitation" and it can really help them with their forecasts, warnings, and special weather statements. You can send in as many "Intense Precipitation Reports" as you feel appropriate to help track storms as they cross your area. But then don't forget you still need to send in your regularly daily report.

2008 Water Year Summaries

Thanks to the several hundred of you who made the effort to review your data and send in a summary report for the Water Year (October 1, 2007 - September 30, 2008). If you are still working to compile your report, go

ahead and send it to me whenever you're ready but hopefully by October 24th.

California now, North Dakota next!

As of this morning, 90 Californians have signed up for CoCoRaHS. That only leaves about 38 million more to go :-). Kidding aside, we are off to a great start in California and we greatly appreciate the efforts that our planning team in California have done to spread the word. Keep reminding your friends and relatives there that measuring rain is easy and helpful.

Next up is North Dakota coming online later this month.

CoCoRaHS Blog <http://cocorahs.blogspot.com/>

Just a reminder that one of our very loyal volunteers, Chris Spears, is continuing to maintain a blog for CoCoRaHS that keeps track of some of the interesting weather events going on across the country. Chris helped us get CoCoRaHS started in the Denver, Colorado area when he was a meteorology student at Metropolitan State College in Denver several years ago. He has written many, many messages including some great weather tutorials. Use the blog archives if you want to catch up on your meteorology. :-)

T-shirt Alert

We continue to get requests for CoCoRaHS t-shirts. We have closed our little "CoCoRaHS Store" because it is too time consuming. But I am pleased to report that our t-shirts are now going to be available through

www.WeatherYourWay.com

Proceeds from CoCoRaHS t-shirts will continue to come to us to help cover a few expenses of our project.

Also, this is a good time to think about ordering a second outer tube for your rain gauge. Winter measurements are so much easier if you have two large cylinders. Then you can set one out, bring the other one in, and not have to rush to melt the snow.

So many thanks!

Thanks again for your teamwork in helping make CoCoRaHS a great national resource for accurate precipitation data. Keep up the great work.

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