

April Fool's Day Blizzard

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Storm type:	Nor'easter
Formed:	March 30, 1997
Dissipated:	April 1, 1997
Pressure:	Lowest 28.90 Inches of Mercury
Fatalities:	3 (possibly 4)
Areas affected:	New England , PA , NY , NJ

The April Fool's Day Blizzard was a major winter storm in the Northeastern United States on March 31 and April 1, 1997. The storm dumped rain, sleet, and snow from Maryland to Maine leaving hundreds of thousands without power and as much as three feet of snow on the ground.

Due to the day many people took the warning with a grain of salt and thought it wouldn't be that bad. Plows had already begun to be put away for the summer and hardware stores had to sell shovels again even though they already had out patio furniture. One commuter called it "Life of the storm

Formation

The storm started as a surface low pressure system over the Ohio River Valley that was generated by an area of strong jet stream energy carving out an active upper air low pressure trough on Sunday March 30. The low pressure system brought rain to much of the Ohio Valley.

When the storm arrived in eastern New York and western New England the areas received light rain. The storm moved off the coast of New Jersey on March 31 and began rapidly strengthening and intensified air began rising vertically around the storm at a very rapid rate which cooled in the atmosphere and as a result the rain changed into heavy snow. The low moved very slowly along the coast gaining strength throughout the day with continuous supply of moisture supporting allowing an extended period of heavy snow.

New England

Prior to the storm, Boston had received just 26.5 inches of snow for the season. On March 30, Boston was sunny with a high temperature of 63°F and a cold front passed the next day dropping the temperature into the 40s. Just prior to dawn on Monday March 31, precipitation began to fall in the form of light rain. In Boston the rain began to mix with wet snow mid-morning and eventually turned to wet snow and became heavier just after 7 p.m. From 7 p.m. to 11 p.m. the snow fell at a rate of at least 1 inch per hour.

During the peak of the storm from about 11 p.m. March 31 to 3 a.m. April 1, snow fell in Boston at an almost unheard-of rate of 3 inches per hour, some of the heaviest Boston had ever seen. Numerous lightning strikes and thunderclaps accompanied the extremely heavy snow, which accumulated one foot (12 inches) in just that four hour period. Moderate to heavy snow continued through midmorning before tapering off.

Precipitation received

The 25.4 inches that fell at Boston's Logan International Airport was the third-biggest snowstorm in Boston history (biggest in the month of April) behind the North American blizzard of 2003 (27.5 inches) and the Northeastern United States blizzard of 1978 (27.1 inches) and made April 1997 the Boston's snowiest April on record (the previous record being a mere 13.3 inches). It also set a record for Boston's greatest April 24-hour snowfall. Parts of New England received 50 to 70 mph wind gusts at the height of the storm. Providence recorded 18 inches of snow which was the fourth greatest on record at the time.^[3] Other parts of New England reported more than 30 inches¹ and up to three feet with Worcester receiving 33 inches, the city's largest snowfall in history.

Damage and travel disruptions

A state of emergency was declared by Massachusetts Gov. William F. Weld. The snow came down too fast for road crews to keep up with and roads became impassable and thousands of cars were stranded. Commuter trolleys in Boston were closed for the first time in nearly twenty years, public transportation was crippled, about 1,000 motorists spent the night stranded in their cars and 4,000 stayed in shelters. Some of the narrow side streets of Boston were completely buried and portions of Interstate 95 and Route 128 were shut down because of the snow. The main roads and highways were cleared within a couple of days but the secondary roads remained a mess making travel difficult. Two days after the storm, subways and commuter rails were still sluggish because of fallen trees and signal problems.

The wet and heavy snow caused tree limbs and even whole trees to fall. Some fell on power lines, and many people were left without power. Electricity was knocked out for nearly 700,000 people. Nearly 13% of New England lost power, mainly due to trees falling on power lines and utility poles. Power crews from as far away as Canada came to help clean up the area.

Logan Airport was also shut down from 2 p.m. March 31 to 10 p.m. April 1. On April 3, despite a clear blue sky and temperatures in the 50s, travelers were still stranded at Logan Airport.

Mid-Atlantic

Upstate New York received 32 inches and in some parts of New Jersey two feet of snow fell causing delays on commuter trains.^[4] A disaster was declared in eight northeast counties by Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Ridge and the National Guard of the United States was dispatched to dig out cars. Interstate 84 had to be shut down because of a ten vehicle accident.

Injuries and deaths

Hospitals reported weather-related injuries including back sprains, pedestrians being hit by falling ice, and hand injuries including missing fingers from snow blowers.^{[7][8]} Three deaths were caused by the storm in Massachusetts and Rhode Island, all men

who had heart attacks while shoveling, with another traffic death in New York which may have been caused by the weather.