

Storms dumps 20 inches on city making February snowiest month since 1869

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Matthews/AP

People walk down a snowy street on February 26, 2010 in Brooklyn.

A record-breaking winter storm dumped more than 20 inches of snow on the city Friday, closing schools and offices, grounding flights and cutting off power to thousands of homes.

By the afternoon, 20.8 inches had fallen in Central Park, for a monthly total of 36.9 - more than 3 feet, making this the snowiest month since records began in 1869. It was the fourth-largest one-day snowstorm in history.

"It's been a very high impact storm," said the National Weather Service's Richard Castro.

Mayor Bloomberg decided at 5 a.m. to close the city's more than 1,600 public schools. He apologized for the short notice and acknowledged it would force many parents to stay home from work, but said safety was paramount.

"[It] was simply too dangerous to put 1.1 million children on the streets and sidewalks this morning," he said. "Sorry for any inconvenience."

Con Edison reported 28,000 customers lost power in Westchester County and 2,300 in New York City.

Snow plows kept avenues and streets clear, but at least one death was reported, a man who was felled by a snow-laden tree branch in Central Park on Thursday.

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With Daniel Roberts and Matthew Lysiak

FEBRUARY 25, 2010 TO FEBRUARY 26, 2010 EVENT

Synopsis NWS

A strong Nor'Easter spread significant snow and windy conditions across the Middle Atlantic region from Thursday February 25th into Friday February 26th. An area of low pressure developed off the Carolina coast late Wednesday night February 24th and then strengthened as it tracked northward to near Long Island, New York by Thursday evening. As low pressure aloft deepened over the Mid Atlantic coast Thursday night into Friday, the surface low retrograded and moved westward into northern New Jersey and southern New York. By Saturday February 27th, the low pushed into southern New England and gradually weakened over the weekend.

Strong wind gusts were measured throughout the Middle Atlantic region as a result of this coastal storm. Some of the highest wind gusts recorded include 62 mph measured at Cape May, NJ; 52 mph at the Atlantic City Marina; 51 mph at the Mount Pocono Airport and at Lewes, DE; and 50 mph at Dover Air Force Base. Wind gusts of 40 mph or greater were also recorded at Philadelphia, Wilmington, and Allentown. Considerable blowing and drifting snow resulted, especially from the Poconos eastward into northern New Jersey. Snow drifts as high as 3 to 5 feet were seen across portions of Warren and Sussex counties in New Jersey.

Total accumulations of 20 inches or more were recorded from Morris and Sussex counties in New Jersey westward into Monroe county Pennsylvania. A band of 12 to 18 inches of snow accumulation was measured from Warren and Morris counties in New Jersey westward to Lehigh county Pennsylvania. In addition to snow that accumulated during the daytime on Thursday, many locations across the region experienced a heavier burst of snow with gusty winds Thursday night into early Friday thanks to additional moisture that wrapped around the low pressure system. Some areas saw snowfall rates of 1 to 2 inches per hour, especially from northern New Jersey and into the Poconos.