

Buffalo, N.Y., area in the midst of a truly insane lake effect snow storm

By [Angela Fritz](#) November 18

A lake effect snowstorm led to heavy snowfall in upstate New York on Monday night. Social video captured the scene Tuesday morning with dogs and people playing in the snow. (Divya Jeswani Verma/The Washington Post)

On Thursday: Historic lake effect snow just won't stop in western New York

Update at 9:25 p.m.: The National Weather Service now reports up to 60 inches (5 feet!) of snow about 6 miles east, southeast of Buffalo near Lancaster:

Update at 4:52 p.m.: The National Weather Service has reported that one part of Cheektowaga, N.Y., has accumulated 51 inches of snow thus far, while on the other side of town, only two inches has been measured, illustrating the incredible snowfall gradient that the Buffalo area is experiencing today.

Lake-effect snow hits Buffalo area

NOV. 19, 2014

Wednesday

NOV. 18, 2014

Tuesday

As of Thursday morning, more than five feet of snow had accumulated in Erie County, N.Y.

Nov. 20, 2014 Trucks sit stranded on a closed New York state thruway in the town of Cheektowaga near Buffalo. Lindsay DeDario/Reuters

Some 70 inches of snow could hit the Buffalo, N.Y., area before it's said and done, adding an ominous note to a pre-Thanksgiving wintry season.

Other notable totals include 48 inches in Alden, 46 inches in Elma, and 45 inches in West Seneca, all in the state of New York.

*****STORM TOTAL SNOWFALL*****

LOCATION	STORM TOTAL SNOWFALL /INCHES/	TIME/DATE OF MEASUREMENT	COMMENTS
NEW YORK			
...ERIE COUNTY...			
2 S CHEEKTOWAGA	51.0	330 PM 11/18	TRAINED SPOTTER
2 SW ALDEN	48.0	1252 PM 11/18	TRAINED SPOTTER
3 WSW ELMA	46.0	1215 PM 11/18	COCORAHS
WEST SENECA	45.0	1141 AM 11/18	SOCIAL MEDIA
DEPEW	42.0	1200 PM 11/18	TRAINED SPOTTER
LANCASTER	42.0	900 AM 11/18	NWS EMPLOYEE
1 N HAMBURG	37.0	330 PM 11/18	NWS EMPLOYEE
ALDEN	34.0	106 PM 11/18	NWS EMPLOYEE
ORCHARD PARK	32.0	129 PM 11/18	NWS EMPLOYEE
WEST FALLS	29.0	318 PM 11/18	SOCIAL MEDIA
3 SW BLASDELL	27.0	335 PM 11/18	TRAINED SPOTTER
EAST AURORA	17.0	1240 PM 11/18	NWS EMPLOYEE
DERBY	14.0	100 PM 11/18	TRAINED SPOTTER
3 N CHEEKTOWAGA	2.0	125 PM 11/18	PUBLIC

Update at 4:00 p.m.: The snow has not let up one bit south of Buffalo, N.Y., this afternoon, where at least 48 inches has accumulated in under 24 hours in Lancaster, Lackawanna, and West Seneca, N.Y. The snow has become so bad, that the National Guard will help to dig people out.

Erie County Supervisor Mark Poloncarz announced at an afternoon conference that Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo is dispatched the National Guard to help dig us out.

It's looking like this storm could turn out to be one of the history books, meteorologists agreed. "This will be a historic event. Absolutely. It is a historic event," said Dave Zaff, also with the weather service. Around 70 inches of snow is expected in the heaviest bands through at least Thursday. The week's totals will undoubtedly rival the all-time snowfall record for Buffalo, which was 81.6 inches over the course of five days in 2001.

After a brief snow hiatus on Wednesday afternoon and evening, another round is expected to begin on Thursday morning. The National Weather Service has issued another lake effect snow warning from Thursday until Friday afternoon.

Original post:

An insane lake effect snow band has set up just south of Buffalo, N.Y., the home of some of the most intense lake effect snow in the country. Yes, you're reading this correctly — *five to six feet of snow* is expected around Buffalo, N.Y., through Thursday.

Some locations south of the city have already picked up more than three feet of snow as of Tuesday morning. The band of lake effect snow in question set up in earnest on Monday night after this week's powerful cold front pushed through the eastern U.S.

The National Weather Service warned of snowfall rates up to [four inches per hour](#) on Tuesday afternoon. Around 2 p.m., the Weather Service issued a special weather statement for the extreme snow rates, warning that "you will become trapped" if you attempt to drive in or through the areas under the snow band:

...INTENSE LAKE EFFECT SNOW WILL CONTINUE TO IMPACT THE SOUTHERN HALF OF THE BUFFALO METRO AREA...

* AT 142 PM EST...NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE DOPPLER RADAR INDICATED A LAKE EFFECT SNOW BAND CAPABLE OF PRODUCING SNOWFALL RATES OF 4 INCHES PER HOUR OR MORE...AND VISIBILITY NEAR ZERO AT TIMES. THE SHARP NORTHERN EDGE OF THIS LAKE EFFECT SNOW BAND EXTENDS FROM SOUTH BUFFALO TO DEPEW AND EASTWARD TOWARDS DARIEN AND ALEXANDER. THE SOUTHERN EDGE OF THE BAND IS HUGGING THE CHAUTAUQUA COUNTY SHORELINE THEN EXTENDING INLAND ACROSS FAR NORTHERN CHAUTAUQUA COUNTY...THE BOSTON HILLS...AND WYOMING COUNTY.

TRAVEL WITHIN THE MOST INTENSE PORTION OF THIS BAND FROM SOUTH BUFFALO INTO THE NEARBY SOUTHERN AND EASTERN SUBURBS IS IMPOSSIBLE. LOCAL OFFICIALS REPORT ALL ROADS ARE IMPASSABLE AND CLOGGED WITH SNOW AND STUCK VEHICLES. DO NOT VENTURE OUT WITHIN THIS AREA. IF YOU LIVE NORTH OR SOUTH OF THE BAND OF SNOW DO NOT ATTEMPT TO DRIVE INTO THE AFFECTED AREAS...YOU WILL BECOME TRAPPED.

Coldest November morning since 1976; All 50 states freeze

Once the winds over the lake turned from the southwest, it was game, set, match for Buffalo. A southwest wind over Lake Erie — especially this early in the season, when water temperatures are still relatively warm — puts the city into a wintry vise that's difficult to break.



“Holy moly,” writes this Instagramer in South Buffalo. (Celina Velasquez [via Instagram](#))

On Tuesday the Weather Service office in Buffalo wrote an ominous update to the lake effect snow watch:

939 AM EST TUE NOV 18 2014

...LAKE EFFECT SNOW WARNING REMAINS IN EFFECT UNTIL 1 PM EST WEDNESDAY...

...LAKE EFFECT SNOW WATCH REMAINS IN EFFECT FROM LATE WEDNESDAY NIGHT THROUGH LATE THURSDAY NIGHT...

* LOCATIONS...ERIE...GENESEE...AND WYOMING COUNTIES INCLUDING THE BUFFALO METRO AREA. NORTHERN EXTENT OF THE SNOW BAND FROM ROUGHLY A LINE FROM DOWNTOWN BUFFALO TO DEPEW AND BATAVIA.

* TIMING...WARNING THROUGH MIDDAY WEDNESDAY. WATCH FROM LATE WEDNESDAY NIGHT THROUGH LATE THURSDAY NIGHT.

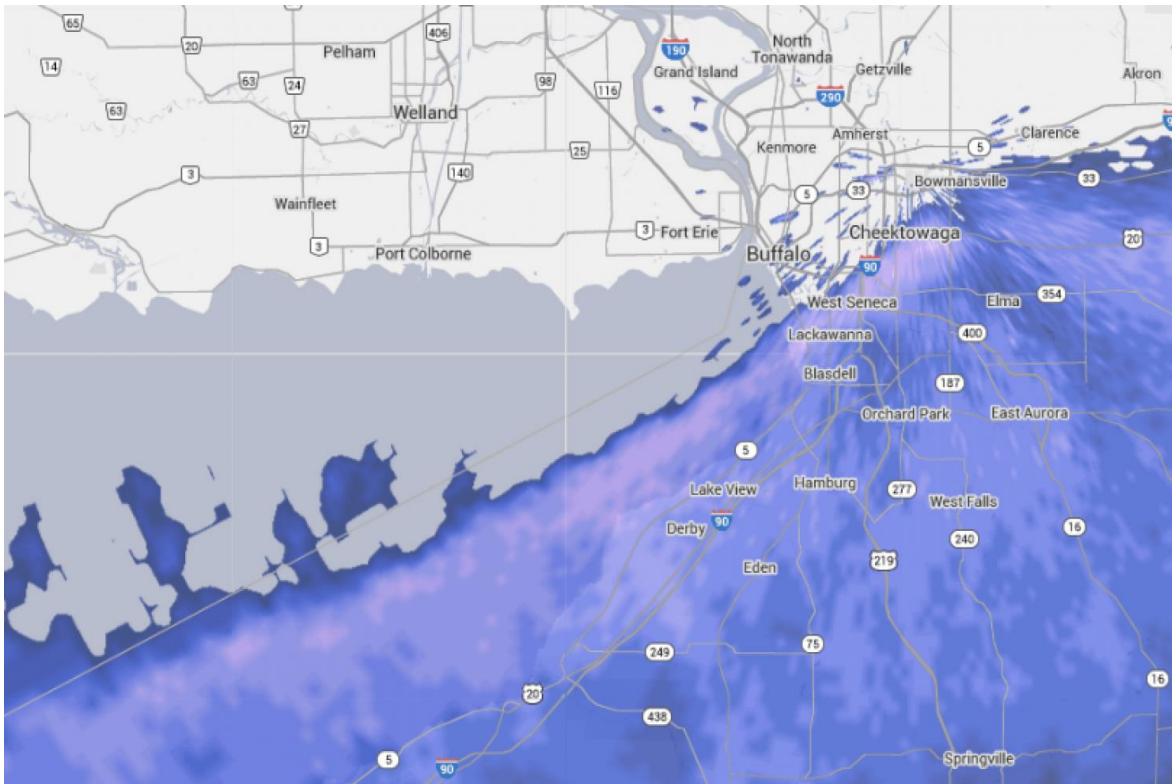
* ACCUMULATIONS...SNOWFALL RATES OF 3 TO 5 INCHES PER HOUR IN THE MOST INTENSE PORTION OF THE BAND. THIS WILL BRING STORM TOTALS TO 5 TO 6 FEET IN THE MOST PERSISTENT SNOWS.

* WINDS...SOUTHWEST 20 TO 30 MPH WITH GUSTS TO 40 MPH PRODUCING LOCALIZED BLIZZARD CONDITIONS AT TIMES WITH SIGNIFICANT BLOWING AND DRIFTING SNOW.

* VISIBILITIES...NEAR ZERO AT TIMES.

* IMPACTS...INTENSE LAKE EFFECT SNOW AND BLOWING SNOW WILL RESULT IN VERY DIFFICULT OR NEARLY IMPOSSIBLE TRAVEL AT TIMES WITHIN THE MOST INTENSE PORTION OF THE BAND. EXPECT WIDESPREAD ROAD CLOSURES. TRAVEL WILL BE IMPOSSIBLE WITHIN THE BAND. IF YOU MUST TRAVEL BE PREPARED FOR SEVERE WINTER DRIVING CONDITIONS WITH NEAR ZERO VISIBILITY AND DEEP SNOW COVER ON ROADS. THIS INCLUDES THE NEW YORK STATE THRUWAY FROM SILVER CREEK TO BATAVIA.

What's even more amazing about these particularly epic lake effect snow events is that just a couple miles away, there's basically no snow on the ground. The towns of Lackawanna, West Seneca and south Cheektowaga are taking the brunt of the storm, where at least three feet of snow has fallen. A mere 10 minute drive to the north in Buffalo itself, there's just a dusting of snow, and the sun is out.



Radar image from Tuesday morning over Buffalo, N.Y. An intense band of lake effect snow has set up over eastern Lake Erie, dumping three to four feet of snow on West Seneca and Cheektowaga as of Tuesday morning. (Weather Underground)

Travel bans have been implemented across the Buffalo area. Parts of Interstate 90 are closed because of snow accumulation. But the snow still caught some people on the roads early Tuesday morning. “Since midnight, drivers have been stuck near the Lackawanna toll barrier on the Thruway,” writes The Buffalo News. “The State Police estimate 120 vehicles in the area near exit 55.”

According to [WIVB](#), states of emergency have been declared in the area:

The Village of Lancaster and the Town of West Seneca have declared states of emergency because of hazardous road conditions.

Buffalo Mayor Byron Brown spoke to News 4 about the travel ban in South Buffalo. He said, “We do have some vehicles that are stuck. We are asking for no travel in South Buffalo, only emergency vehicles.”

New York Department of Transportation cameras show cars stuck on Interstate 90 in Lackawanna, N.Y., on Tuesday morning:

According to the Weather Service in Buffalo, the largest snow event on record was 81.6 inches in 2001, accumulated over the course of five days. While snowfall records are not

kept for locations other than Buffalo itself, seven feet is still a good indicator of a historic snow event in the region, and south Buffalo will rival that amount by Thursday.



Up to four feet of snow has accumulated in the south Buffalo area as of Tuesday morning. (Nicole Milligan [via Instagram](#))



"Whenever I think people exaggerate buffalo winters and how much snow we get, I will look at this picture and remind myself that it's true." (jbarry247 [via Instagram](#))

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