

Climate-Watch, February 2001

National Climatic Data Center - (last update Mar 01, 2001)



Images
of

Siberia

Images of Siberia

(Click on the image for a larger view) * Images courtesy of the Irkutsk State University.

Review

The Siberian Winter

Weather Log - February 1 - 10, 2001

The Siberian winter, which climatologically arrives in October and lasts through May, has been unusually severe so far this season. The region has experienced its **harshest winter weather in decades**. Some areas reportedly had mid-January temperatures as low as -94 F in the Kemerovo region, some 1800 miles east of Moscow. If those temperatures are accepted as official, this would be a new record low for the continent of Asia. The old record of -90 F was set at both Oimekon and Verkhoyansk, in Siberia in 1892 and 1933 respectively. According to the Disaster Relief Organization, the burn unit of the Irkutsk City Clinical Hospital, which treats both burn and frostbite patients, has been especially busy. Since the beginning of the year, 154 people have been treated for frostbite, and five have died.

Every February 2nd crowds gather at **Gobbler's Knob**, in Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania. A groundhog, **Punxsutawney Phil**, burrowed inside his heated simulated tree trunk was pulled into the limelight once again. A pre-dawn fireworks display helped to ignite (hopefully not literally!) the crowd that has gathered in anticipation of Phil's forecast. **Phil saw his shadow and predicted six more weeks of winter weather.** A February 5-6th snowstorm dumped 1-2 feet of snow across a swath from northern New Jersey through Maine, with lesser amounts elsewhere

in the Northeast and New England. Snowfall generally ranged from 12 to 24 inches, with localized totals reaching nearly three feet. **Alexandria, in central New Hampshire reported 34 inches of snow.** Strong winds which generated considerable blowing and drifting of the snow greatly increased the impact of the storm. See the complete [list of snowfall amounts](#) for this winter event.

Weather Log - February 11 - 20, 2001

Media sources reported that at least 94 individuals died, and thousands were left homeless, after a weekend (10th and 11th) of torrential rains **triggered floods and landslides in the western Indonesia region of Java.** Most of those who died were reportedly buried in the landslides, while others were swept away by floodwaters. The floodwaters inundated at least 19 districts in Java, and most of the victims were reported in the hard hit area of Lebak. In addition, the death toll in Banten province (in the west part of Java Island) has reached 122, following the previously reported floods and landslides. On the Lombok islands of West Nusu Tenggara, 3 days of constant rain and strong winds have led to dozens of uprooted trees since Saturday, and caused 172 waterborne vehicles to become stranded in Lembar Port. Flooding destroyed **20,000 houses and thousands of hectares of rice fields in 130 villages** in 11 districts in East Java.

Media reports indicate that **heavy snow that fell on Sunday** (11th) in Central China's Henan Province forced the closure of some highways and caused delays in air travel. This was reportedly the area's **fourth heavy snowfall since January.**

Also, according to media reports_a **10,000-acre wildfire on Monday** (19th) kept part of a major central Florida highway closed for a second day. A 10-mile section of Interstate 4 remained closed as heavy smoke forced drivers to make detours in traveling between Orlando and Tampa. The blaze, aggravated by drought, is centered 50 miles northeast of Tampa and 35 miles southwest of Orlando. Media reports_indicated that as of mid-February, over 900 fires were reported across Florida.

See the NCDC weekly summary of the Palmer Drought Index, Crop Moisture Index, and temperature and precipitation anomalies based on preliminary data, presented in a color coded map format. The warm and dry conditions across Florida are quite evident.

Weather Log - February 21 - 28, 2001

Heavy rains which began in the second week of January have reportedly affected 250,000 residents, left 3,000 homeless and have killed 41 individuals in Bolivia. The Bolivian government has declared a red alert across the country, and according to the National Civil Defense Office, as of February 19th, 252,160 flood victims have been registered in 9 provinces throughout the country. Media reports indicate that the homes of 314 residents of Chile's Arica and Parinacota provinces have been damaged, while those of 2,245 others have been cut off from surrounding areas as a result of the heavy flooding which is accompanying the fiercest winter the Andean region has experienced in 31 years. The **main roads linking northern Chile with Bolivia and Peru have reportedly been rendered impassable by unusual flooding that has resulted from the heavy rains.**

Southeastern Africa deals with serious flooding: the Africa News Service reported that at least four people drowned and others are missing after flash floods covered a huge area in the Lower Shire River Valley of southern Malawi at mid-month. Flooding also continues in Mozambique-- as of February 19th, 41 deaths were confirmed, and many roads in the center of the country were impassable, while wells in both rural areas and suburbs had flooded affecting the sanitary conditions in urban centers. Media reports also stated that a **critical food shortage is affecting northeastern Zambia's Luangwa district** due to the overflow of the Luangwa River, which was caused by the recent heavy rains. Food supplies are reportedly unable to reach the area due to flooding. The Africa News Service reported on Tuesday (20th) that floods that hit the Muzarabani area of northern Zimbabwe have destroyed crops and homes leaving hundreds of families homeless. **Incessant rains have fallen since the beginning of February**, particularly in the food-producing northern part of the country.

A strong winter storm hit parts of the Middle East on the 20th. The AP reported that the storm caused a Ukrainian cargo ship to be blown ashore on Wednesday (21st) south of Ashdod in Israel and in Jordan the storm caused blizzard conditions across the southern regions of the country on Tuesday (20th) , dumping as much as one foot of snow in some areas as well as stranding motorists and downing power lines. In Lebanon, the AP reported that 500 motorists were trapped on mountain roads by Tuesday's (20th) snowfall. In the capital city of Beirut, hail and heavy rains reportedly caused flooding and numerous traffic accidents overnight. The storms caused the power supply to most of the country to fail reportedly resulting in widespread blackouts. In addition, 2 Syrian workers died on Wednesday (21st) after the storm brought down their makeshift house in the town of Zahle in Bekaa Valley. The northern Syrian town of Idlib reportedly **received 190mm (7.6 in) of rain on Wednesday (21st)**. In the Deir el-Zour province, in eastern Syria, strong winds up to 100km/h stirred up heavy sandstorms that uprooted trees, disrupted power supplies and left 3 individuals dead and 172 hospitalized with respiratory problems.

A violent tornado cut a 23-mile path across Pontotoc County on Saturday night (24th), in northern Mississippi. The tornado killed five people with hundreds injured, and the storm damaged more than 360 homes. Crews using chain saws cut through toppled trees to reach homes and downed power lines, but it could be days before services are restored to the hardest-hit areas.

A ten mile stretch of Interstate 4 which crosses central Florida reopened on the 27th, after being closed for 10 days by a wildfire. A pipeline was built from two nearby ponds so the median could be flooded for two days to put out the fire. The **fire was declared contained Monday (26th)**, after blackening more than 10,500 acres of swamp.

See the [Global Map](#) highlighting these events.

Other global highlights for the month can be found at [NOAA/OGP Special Global Summary for February 2001](#).

Note: Hazard event satellite images available courtesy of [NOAA OSEI Satellite Images WWW site](#).

Selected U.S. City and State Extremes

The [Selected U.S. City and State Extremes](#) provides a list of new monthly or unusual records that were set across the U.S. during February 2001.

<http://www1.ncdc.noaa.gov/pub/data/extremeevents/specialreports/february-ext-2001.pdf>

Additional Resources

[NNDC Climate Data Online \(for long-term climate data\)](#)

[Additional NOAA OSEI Satellite Images](#)

[NCDC Storm Event Database](#)

Citing the Article

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