



# Winter Weather in VT – The Science, Preparation and National Weather Service Headlines

2023 Vermont Emergency Preparedness  
Conference

Burke Mountain Hotel and Conference Center  
21 September 2023

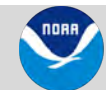
Scott Whittier – [scott.whittier@noaa.gov](mailto:scott.whittier@noaa.gov)  
Warning Coordination Meteorologist  
NOAA/NWS/WFO Burlington, VT





# Outline

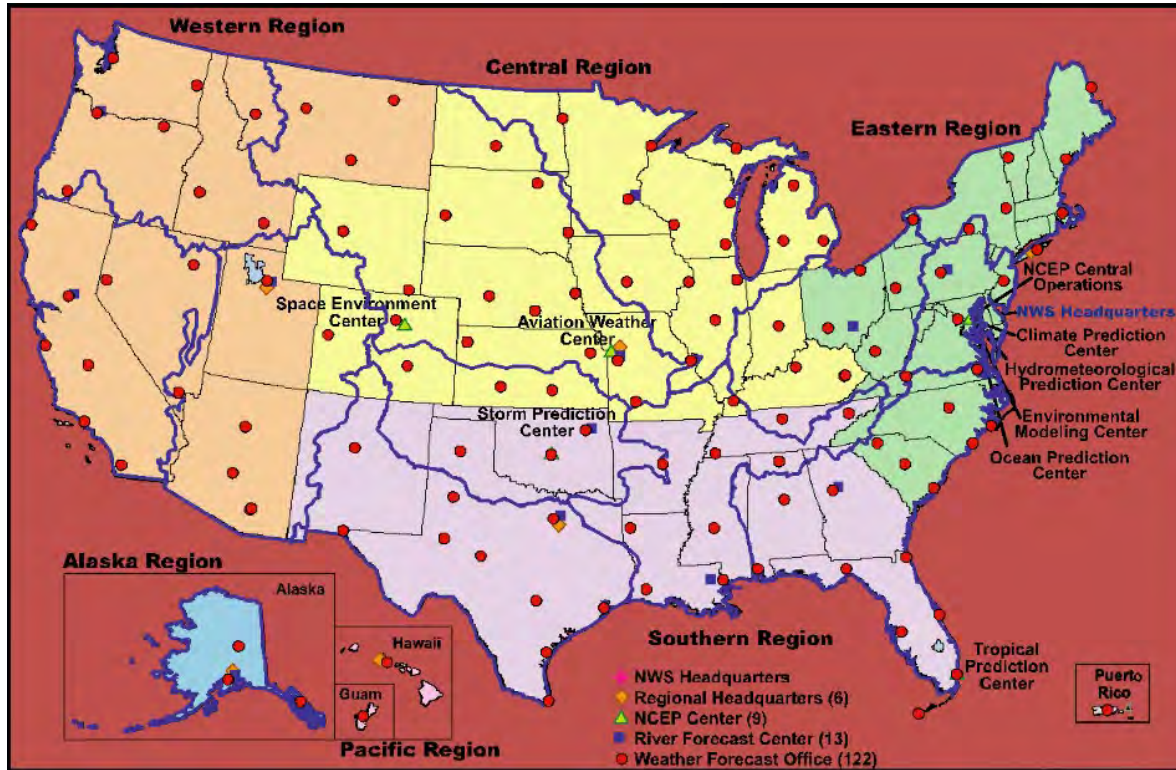
- **NWS Burlington Introduction**
- **NWS Warning Services**
- **NWS Decision Support Services**
  - Services and Messaging to Support Decision Makers
- **Climatology of Winter Weather Events and Review of 2022-23 Winter**
  - Nor'easters
  - Freezing Rain / Ice Storm
  - Strong, Localized Damaging Winds





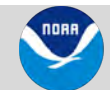
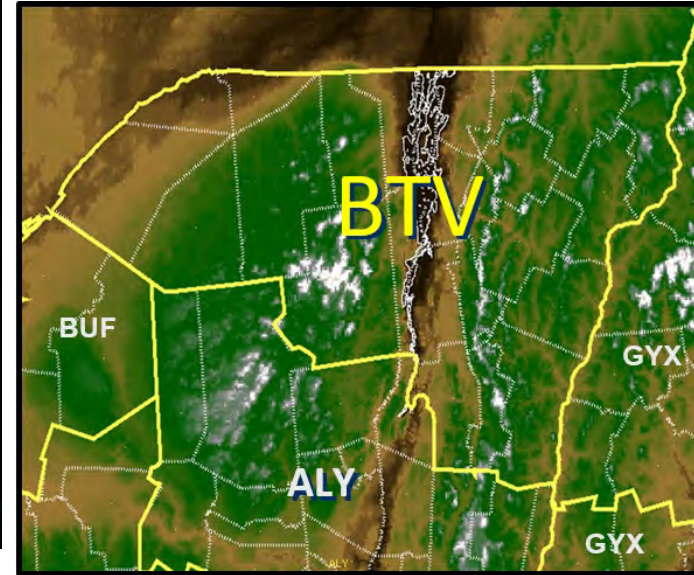
# NWS Office Structure and Mission

Provide climate, water, weather forecasts, warnings and Decision Support Services to *protect life and property.*



**NWS Burlington** is the State Liaison Office and services all of Vermont except Bennington and Windham counties.

**NWS Albany** services Bennington/Windham counties.









# NWS Decision Support Services

## Forecasts and Services:

*What you need, When you need it and in the format(plain language) for the user to understand*

**WHY?!** – Forecasts have NO “intrinsic value” alone.  
They acquire value by people taking the correct, appropriate action to mitigate the hazard.

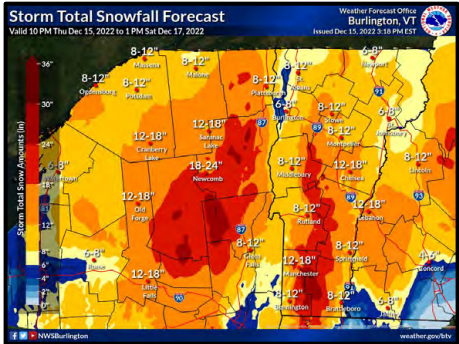
Decision Support Services

Which is more effective?

Forecast

Snow accumulation 4 to 8 inches.

Wet Snow Accumulation of 4 to 8 inches  
*Heavy, wet snow will weigh down tree limbs and power lines for possible isolated to scattered power outages*

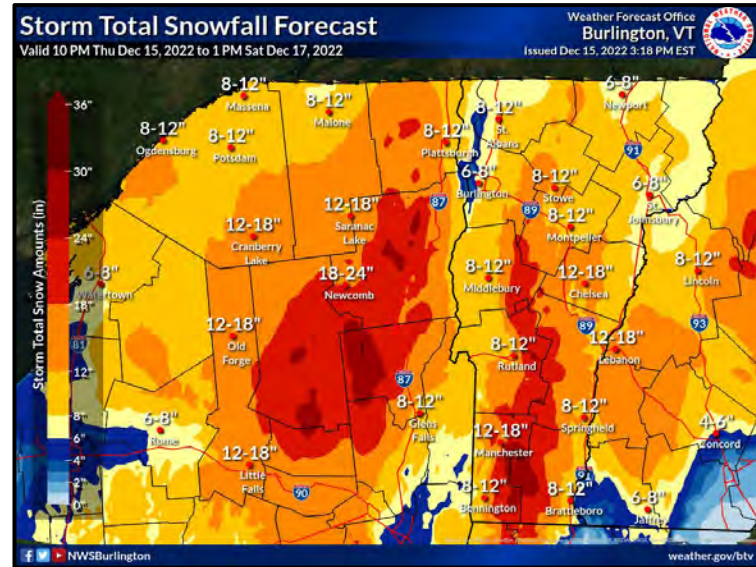




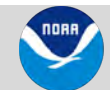
# Messaging Potential Impacts

## BTV Best Practice

- Rather than just showing a map of Snow accumulation, try to reference that map with the **potential impacts** for users to plan, prepare and take action if necessary.
- Developed by using decades of NWS storm data and collaborating with **KEY** partners on storm history and impacts to their operations as well as past research.
- Similar efforts with Strong winds and Ice accumulation potential impacts.



WET Snow Accumulation	Potential Impacts assuming a Snow/Water Ratio 10:1 or less
< 5 inches	Some weighted tree limbs of Conifers and fully leaved trees
5-10 inches (WE .5-1")	Numerous weighted tree limbs and some power lines. Isolated to scattered outages possible.
10-15 inches (WE 1-1.5")	Weighted/snapped tree limbs, especially fully leaved trees. Scattered to Numerous power outages likely.
> 15 inches (WE > 1.5")	Numerous downed tree limbs and some snapped trees. Widespread power outages.

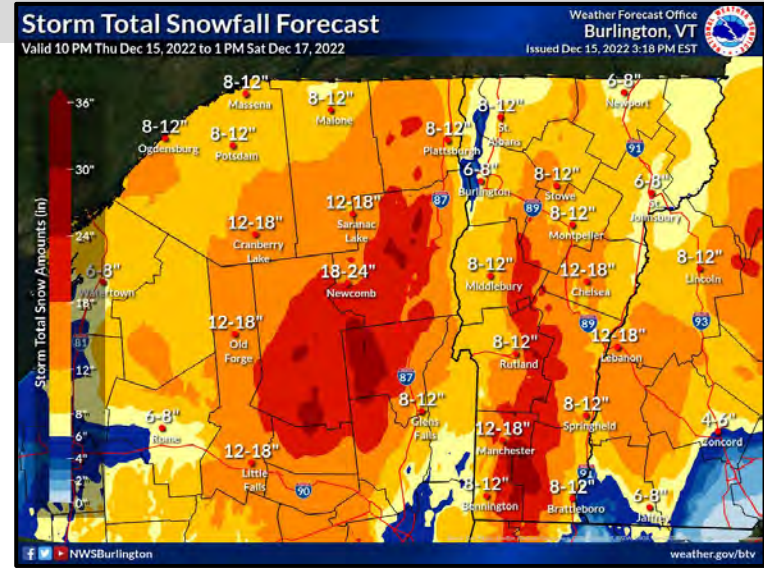






# WET Snow – Potential Impacts (Dec 15-17, 2022)

- ✓ Snow begins late this evening with intervals of heavy snow Friday
- ✓ Possible power outages with heavy wet snow
- ✓ Snow may mix with rain at times in the valleys Friday afternoon
- ✓ Low visibilities and poor road conditions will lead to difficult commutes Friday



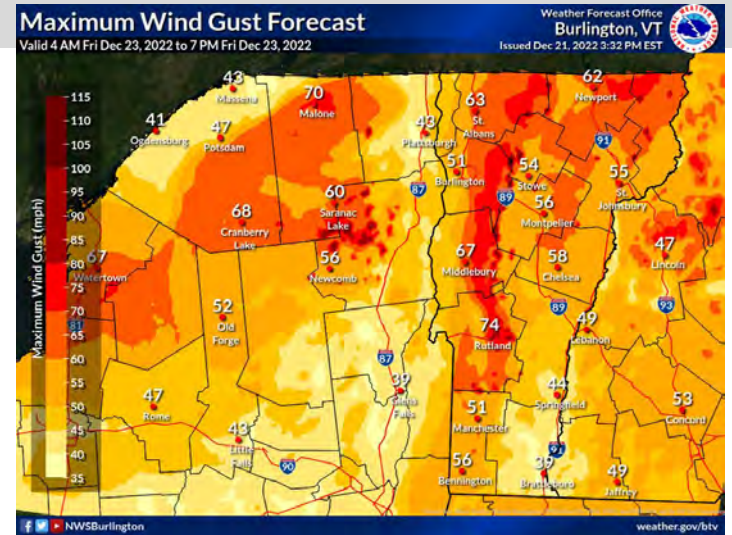
We have a 8:1 Snow Water Ratio Potential Impact Table as well

WET Snow Accumulation	Potential Impacts assuming a Snow/Water Ratio 10:1 or less
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10-15 inches (WE 1-1.5")	Weighted/snapped tree limbs, especially fully leaved trees. Scattered to Numerous power outages likely.
> 15 inches (WE > 1.5")	Numerous downed tree limbs and some snapped trees. Widespread power outages.



# Strong Winds – Potential Impacts (Dec 23, 2022)

- ✓ Southeast winds increase Thursday night and peak mid-morning to early afternoon on Friday.
- ✓ Widespread gusts of 40-50 mph are expected, with up to 65 mph along the western facing slopes of the higher terrain. Summit winds will gust as high 100 mph.
- ✓ Downed tree limbs and/or trees on power lines will result in numerous to widespread power outages.



Wind Speeds	Potential Impacts
< 35 mph	Little impact
35-45 mph	Possible blowing of unsecured objects, small tree limbs down. Isolated power outages possible.
45-55 mph	Several small and larger limbs and small shallow rooted trees possibly knocked down. Scattered power outages possible.
55-65 mph	Numerous branches, several small trees and a few large trees likely knocked down. Scattered shingle damage possible. Scattered to numerous power outages likely.
65-75 mph	Several larger trees likely knocked down or uprooted. Utility lines possibly down. Scattered structural damage possible due to wind and fallen trees. Numerous to widespread power outages likely.
>75 mph	Numerous trees likely knocked down or uprooted. Utility lines likely down. Scattered to numerous structural damage possible due to wind and fallen trees. Widespread power outages likely.





# Messaging Potential Ice Impacts

- **Elevated Horizontal Ice Thickness** is a direct measurement of the depth of ice on top of a flat object above the surface.

- The official NWS ice accretion forecast uses this technique



- **Mean Radial Ice Thickness** is a measurement of ice accretion around a circular branch or wire.



- The conversion between the two methods is to multiply the **Elevated Horizontal Ice Thickness** by 0.4 to get the **Mean Radial Ice Thickness**.



NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE  
NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION



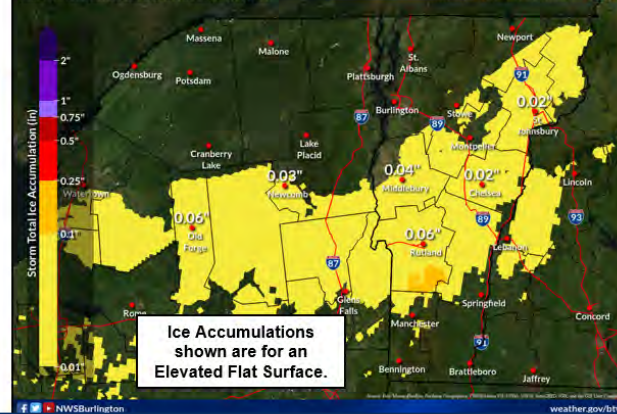
## Ice Accumulation Totals and Potential Impacts

- ✓ Freezing rain will accrete up to a tenth of an inch of ice across mainly central and south-central Vermont and Essex County, New York tonight into Sunday morning.
- ✓ Slippery to hazardous travel is likely, especially on untreated surfaces.

### Storm Total Ice Accumulation Forecast

Valid 7 PM Sat Jan 01, 2022 to 7 PM Sun Jan 02, 2022

Weather Forecast Office  
Burlington, VT  
Issued Jan 01, 2022 2:56 PM EST



Ice Accumulations shown are for an Elevated Flat Surface.

Ice Accumulation	Potential Impacts
Trace to < 1/4" FLAT (T to 0.1" Radial)	Slip to Hazardous road and pedestrian surfaces, especially untreated surfaces.
1/4 to 1/2" FLAT (0.1" to 0.2" Radial)	Hazardous, icy road conditions and some weighted tree limbs. Very isolated power outages possible near 1/2" FLAT.
1/2 to 1 inch FLAT (0.2" to 0.4" Radial)	Dangerous road conditions, hanging limbs and Isolated (1/2" FLAT) to Scattered power outages (1" FLAT) possible.
1 to 2 inches FLAT (0.4" to 0.8" Radial)	Scattered (1" FLAT) to numerous (2" FLAT) power outages likely, possibly lasting a few days. Downed tree limbs and utility lines. Very Dangerous road conditions.
> 2 inches FLAT (> 0.8" Radial)	Numerous to widespread power outages lasting several days. Downed tree limbs, trees and utility lines, possibly causing structural or vehicle damage.



National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
U.S. Department of Commerce

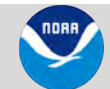
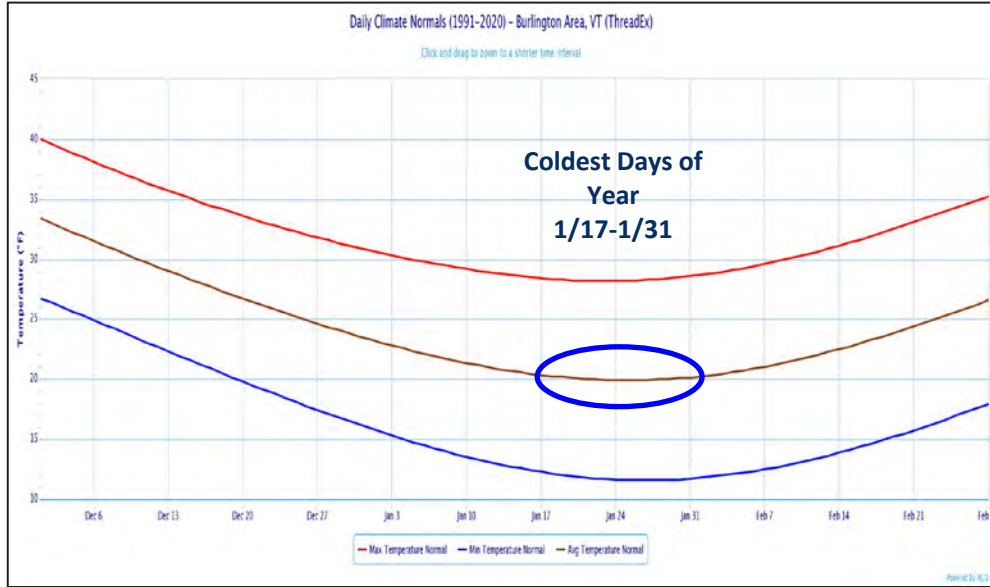
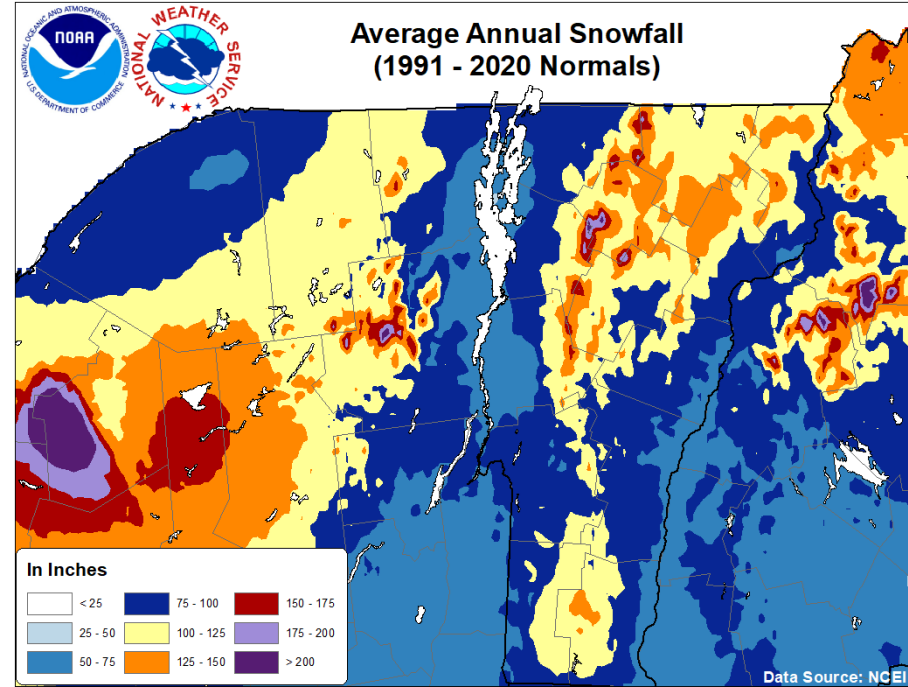


- Winter Climatology and Comparison to Winter 2022-23
- Winter Weather in VT



# Snowfall and Temperature Climatology

Burlington Int'l Airport (South Burlington) ~ 85 inches

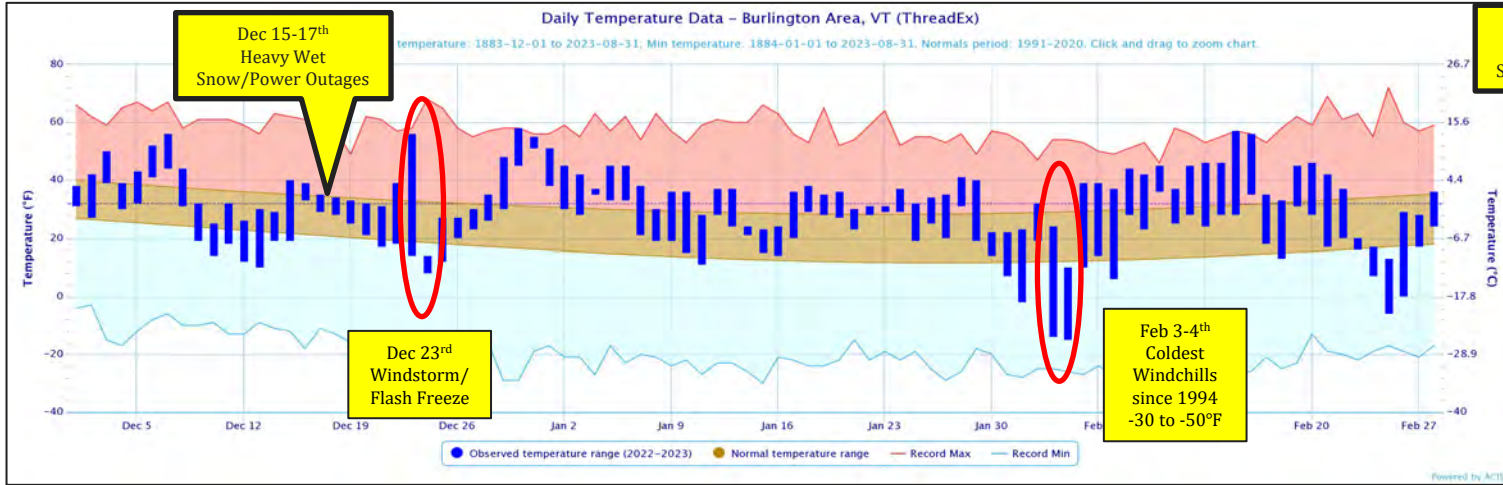






# Winter 2022-23 Temperatures at Burlington, VT

## 3<sup>rd</sup> Warmest Winter



Winter - 24.0°F

Rank	Season	Mean Avg Temperature
1	2015-2016	30.1
2	2016-2017	29.5
<b>3</b>	<b>2022-2023</b>	<b>29.0</b>
4	2001-2002	28.7
5	2011-2012	27.8
6	1932-1933	27.5
7	1905-1906	27.3
8	1936-1937	26.3
9	2019-2020	26.1
10	1931-1932	25.9

+ 5.0 F

Dec - 28.2°F

Rank	Year	Mean Avg Temperature
1	2015	39.2
2	2006	32.6
-	2001	32.6
-	1996	32.6
5	1998	31.9
6	2021	31.8
-	1982	31.8
-	1923	31.8
<b>9</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>31.6</b>
10	1953	31.4

+ 3.4 F

Jan - 20.9°F

Rank	Year	Mean Avg Temperature
1	1906	31.0
2	1990	29.8
3	2017	29.7
-	1932	29.7
<b>5</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>29.2</b>
6	1933	29.1
7	2006	28.2
8	1995	27.9
9	1913	27.8
10	1937	27.6

+ 8.3 F

Feb - 22.9°F

Rank	Year	Mean Avg Temperature
1	1981	32.9
2	2018	30.6
3	2017	29.8
4	1984	28.7
5	2012	28.3
6	1998	27.7
7	1954	27.1
8	1925	26.9
9	1991	26.5
10	2016	26.3
<b>11</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>26.1</b>

+ 3.2 F





# Types of Winter Storms and Impacts in Vermont

## • Nor'easter

- Large amounts of snow, breezy/windy conditions.
- Wet, heavy snow vs. Powdery dry snow (Dec '22/Mar '23)
- **Impacts:** Travel and potential power outage.



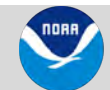
## • Freezing Rain / Ice Storms

- Largely travel impacts with accumulations  $< \frac{1}{4}$ " radial.
- Occurs multiple times each winter. (Freezing Rain).
- Tree/power issues with radial ice accumulation  $> \frac{1}{4}$ " , especially  $\geq \frac{1}{2}$ " (Ice Storm – every ~10+ years).
- **Impacts:** Travel and power outages depending on the areal coverage and ice accumulation.



## • Localized High/Damaging Wind Events

- Frequent wind gusts in excess of 50 mph (Dec '22)
- **Impacts:** Power outages depending on intensity and areal coverage





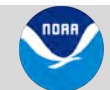
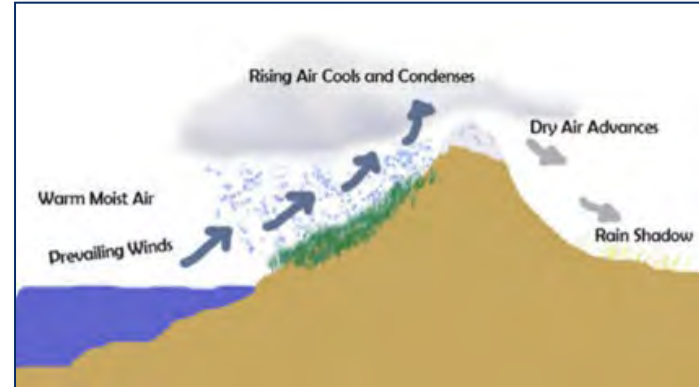
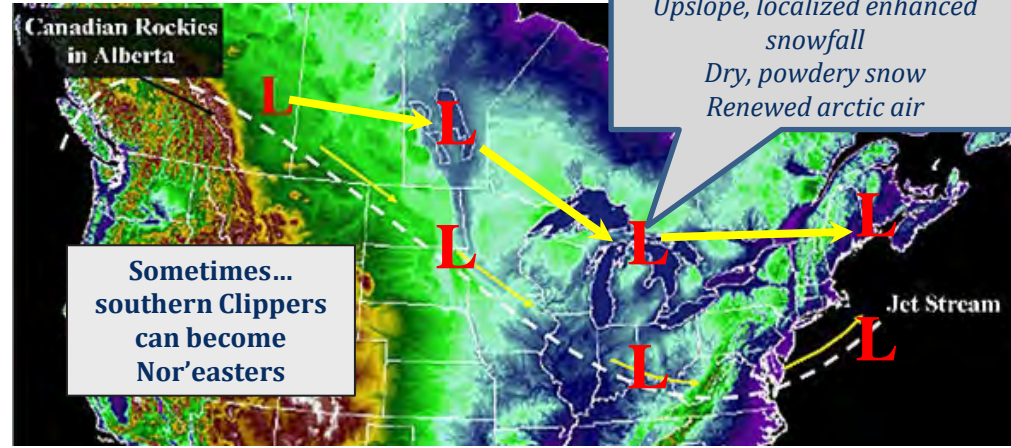
# Types of Winter Storms and Impacts in Vermont

- **“Clipper”**

- Light amount of snowfall, breezy and much colder with generally an arctic air mass.
- **Impacts:** Minor travel

- **Upslope Events**

- Localized heavy snowfall in the mountain upslope regions.
- **Impacts:** Minor travel

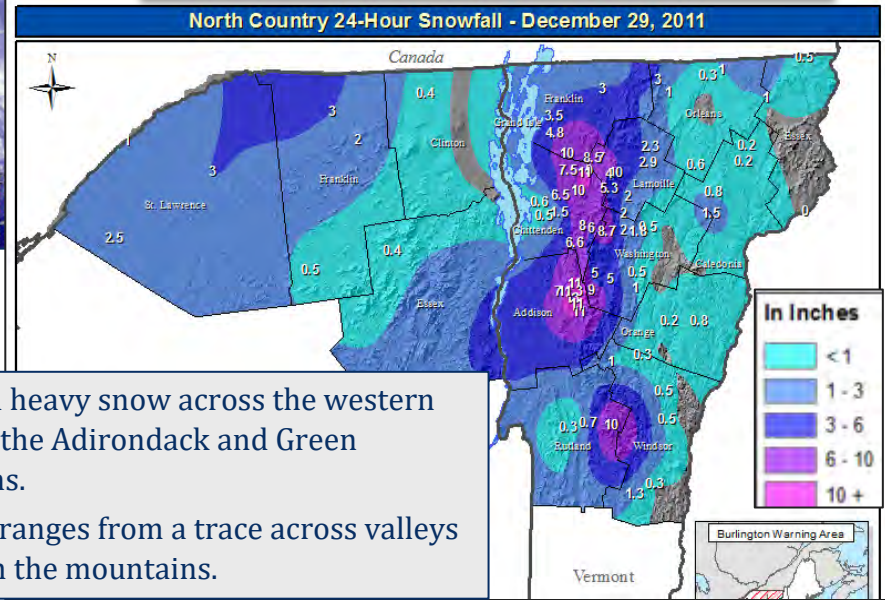
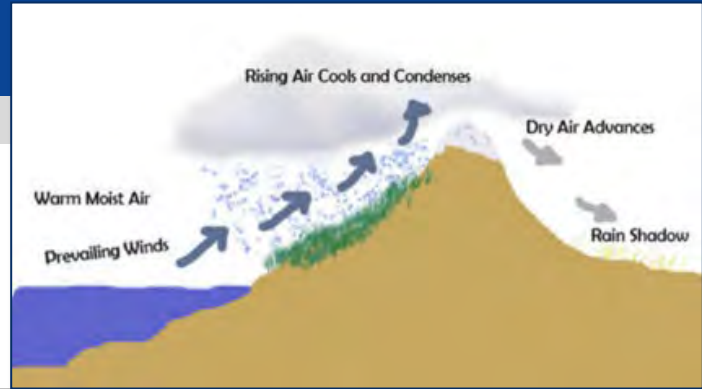
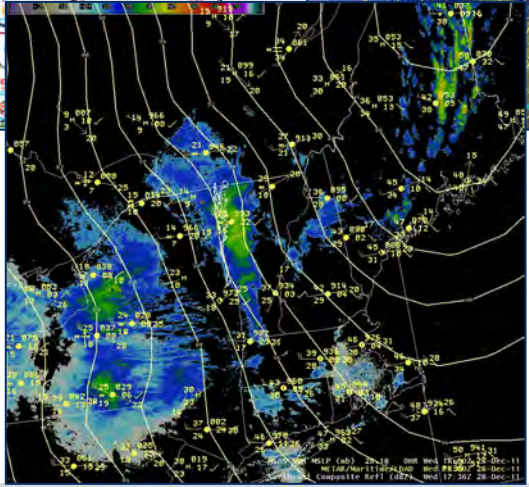
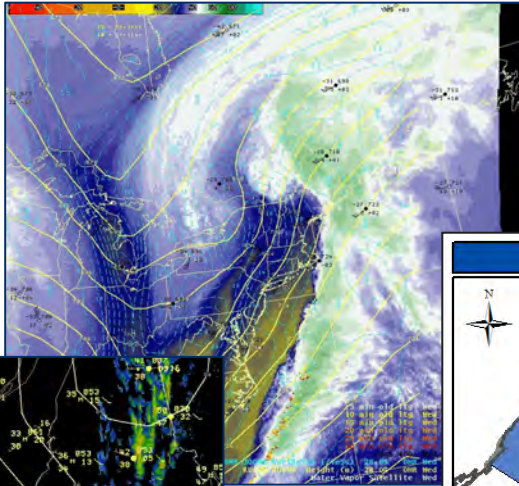
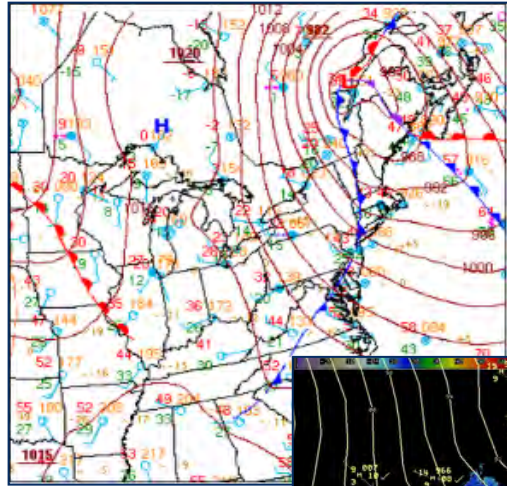






# Upslope Snowfall Event

28-29 December 2011

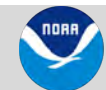


- Localized heavy snow across the western slopes of the Adirondack and Green Mountains.
- Snowfall ranges from a trace across valleys to 12"+ in the mountains.





- More In-Depth Look at Impactful Storms
  - Nor'easter (Dec '22/Mar '23)
  - Ice Storm (Jan '98)
  - Damaging Winds (Dec '22)





# General Nor'easter Characteristics

- **Blizzard-like conditions**

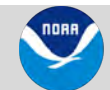
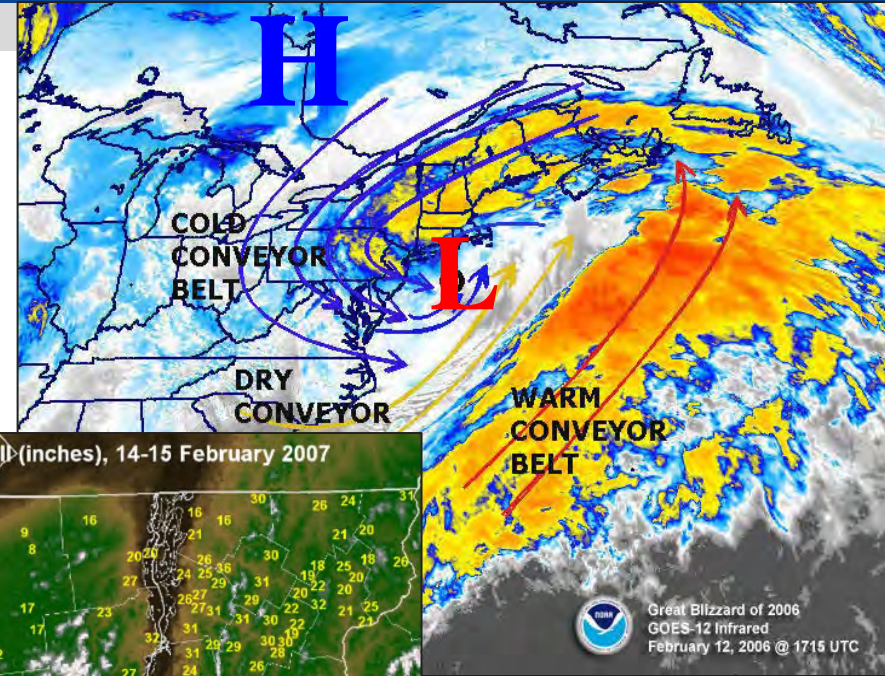
- Strong winds, blowing and drifting snow
  - Visibilities  $\leq \frac{1}{2}$  mile
  - Wind gusts  $\geq 25$  mph

- **Track along eastern seaboard**

- Prevailing northeast surface winds
- Coastal flooding with near hurricane strength

- **Frequency**

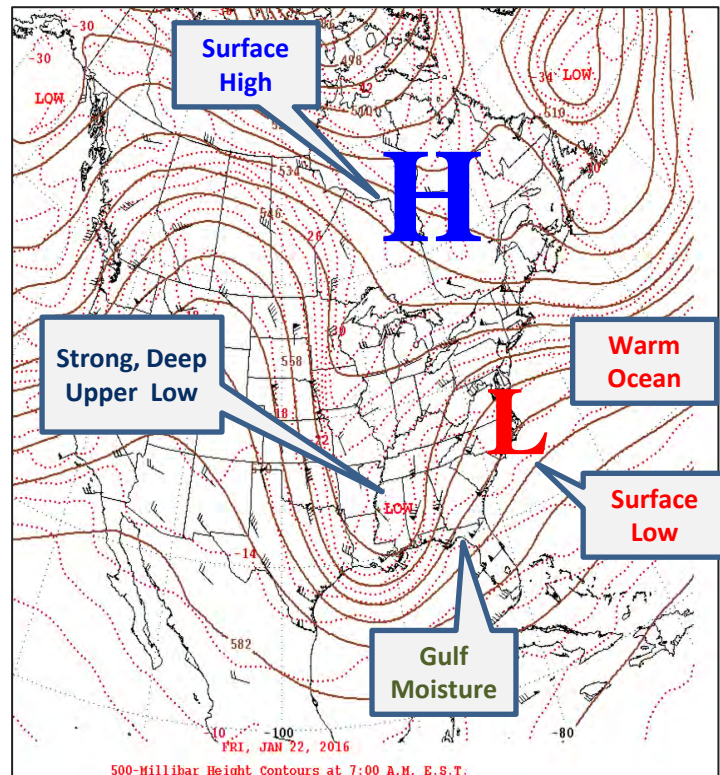
- December through March



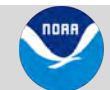
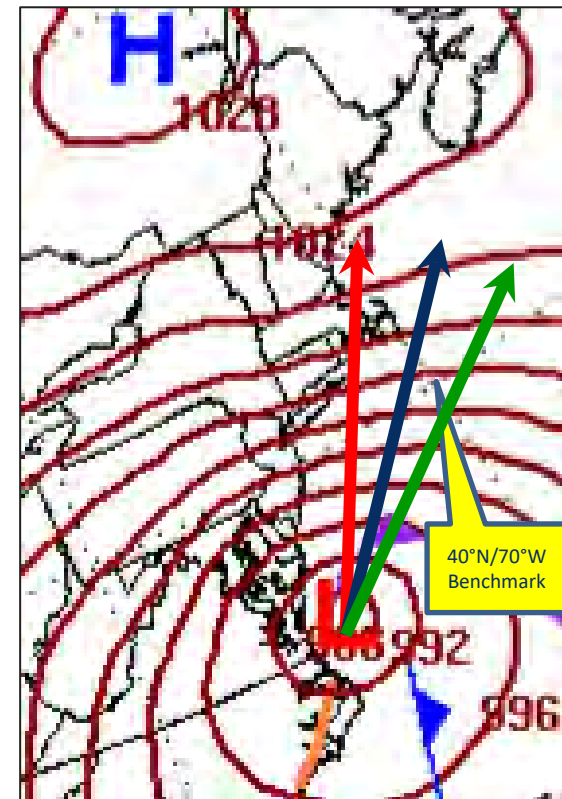




# Nor'easter Complexity and Low Tracks



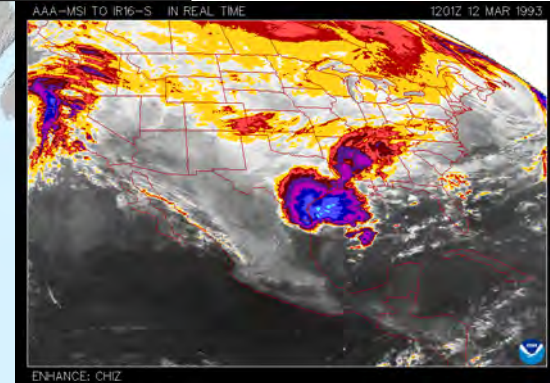
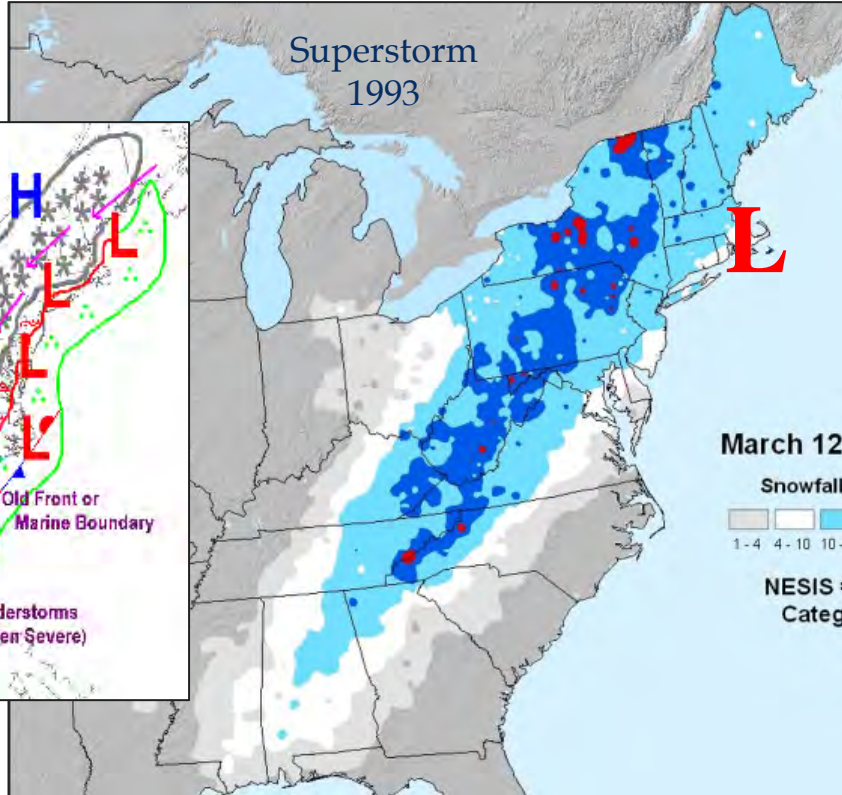
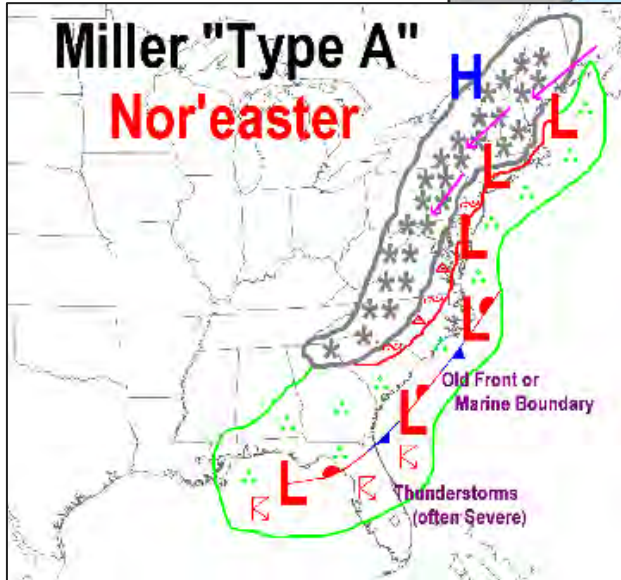
- **Greatest Impact**
  - Impacts ALL of Area
  - Widespread 6-12"+
  - 1-2 feet possible at times
- **Medium Impact**
  - Several inches Northern NY/VT
  - Greatest threat for 6"+ in S/E VT
- **Least Impact**
  - No Snow in North
  - Few inches in southern VT?





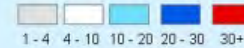
# Two Types of Nor'easters

Origins in the Gulf of Mexico or SE USA and then travels along the coast

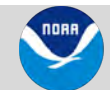


**March 12-14, 1993**

**Snowfall (inches)**



**NESIS = 13.20  
Category 5**



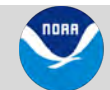
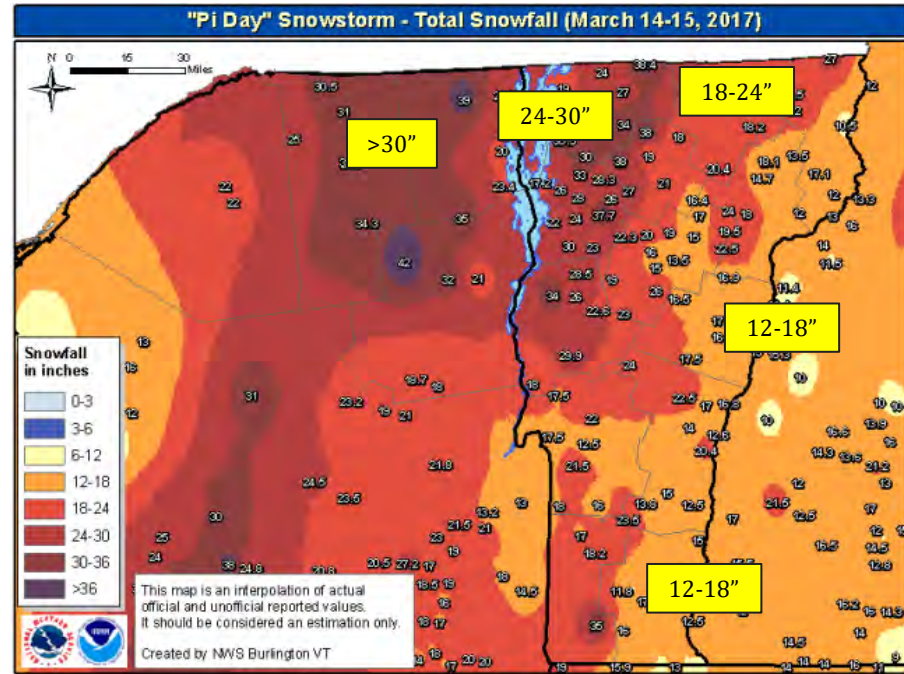
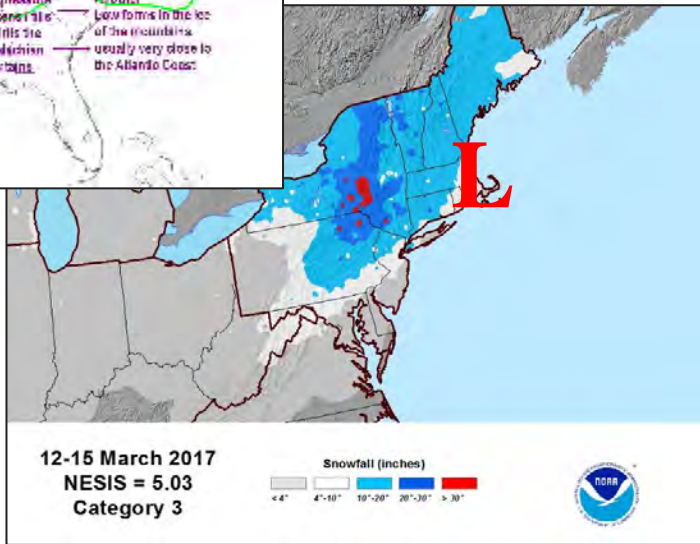
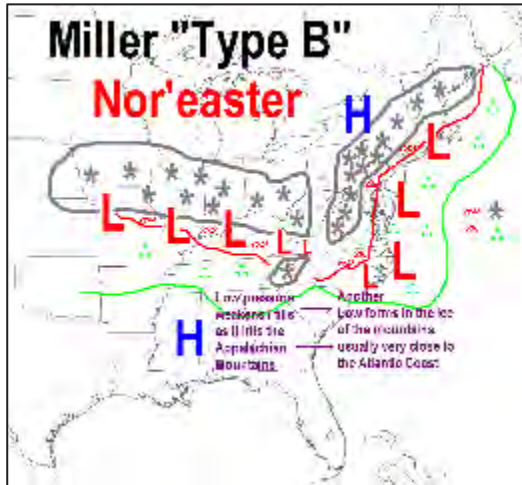




# Two Types of Nor'easters

Origins from the Central Plains and then transfers energy to the Mid-Atlantic coast then moving northeast. (Majority)

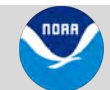
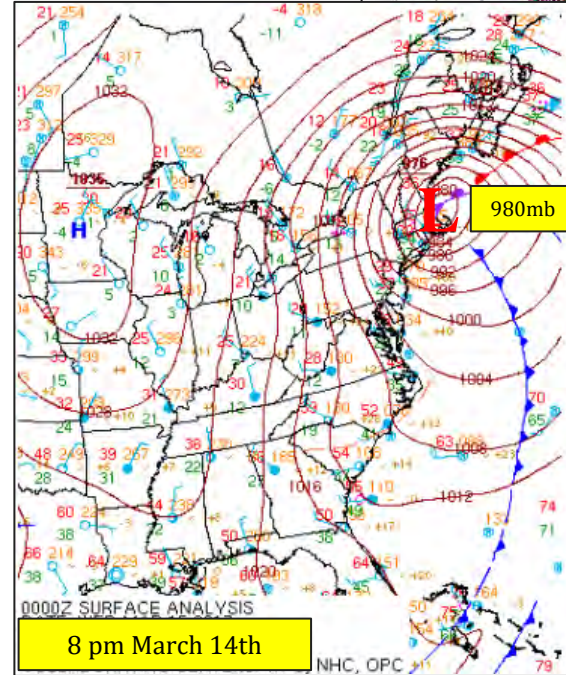
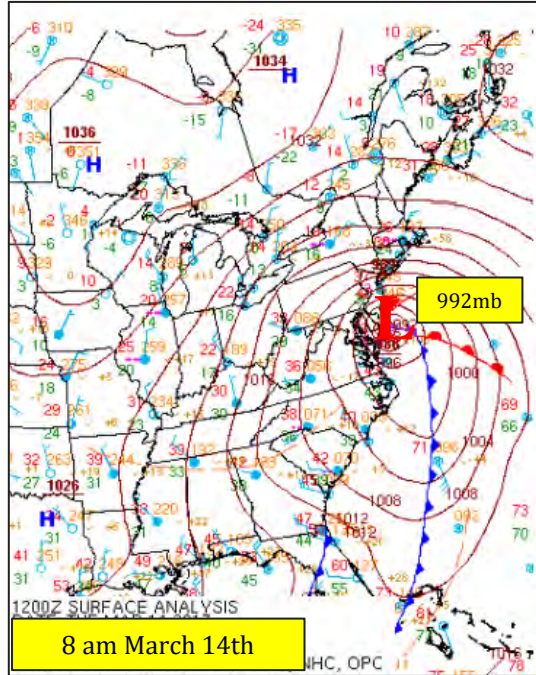
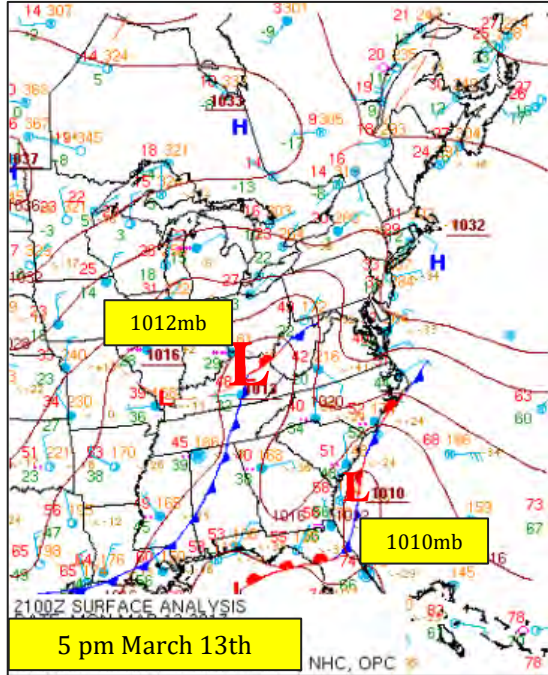
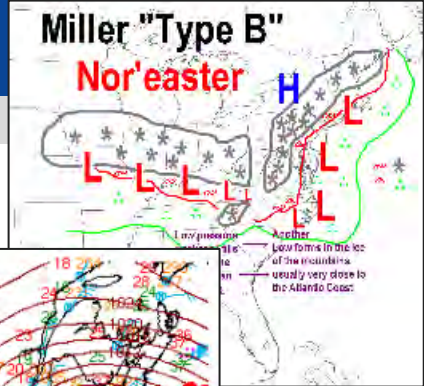
Pi-Day Storm (3/14-3/15) 2017







# Pi-Day Storm 2017 (3/14 – 3/15/2017)

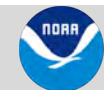
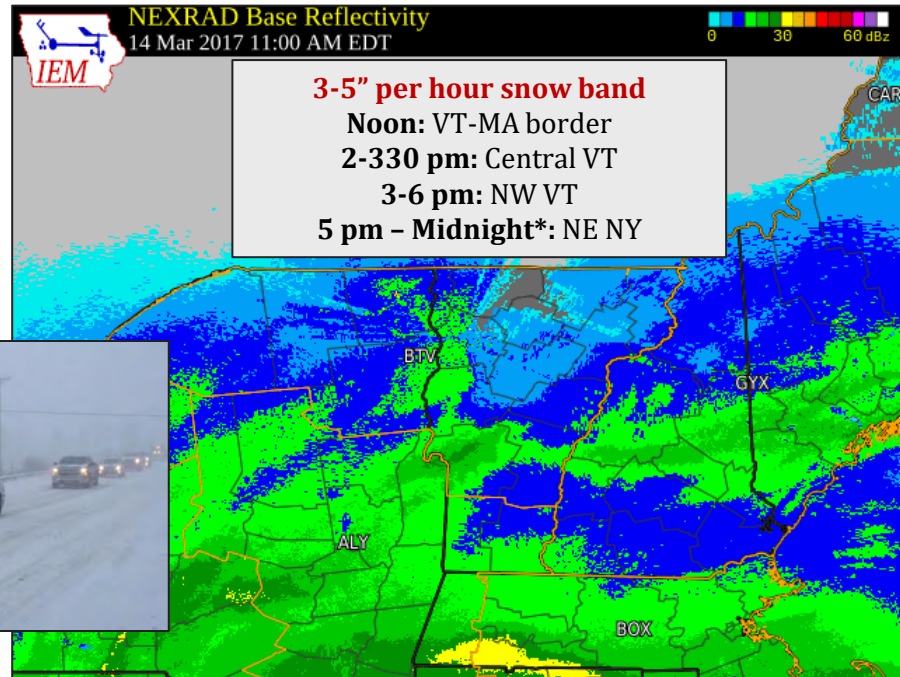
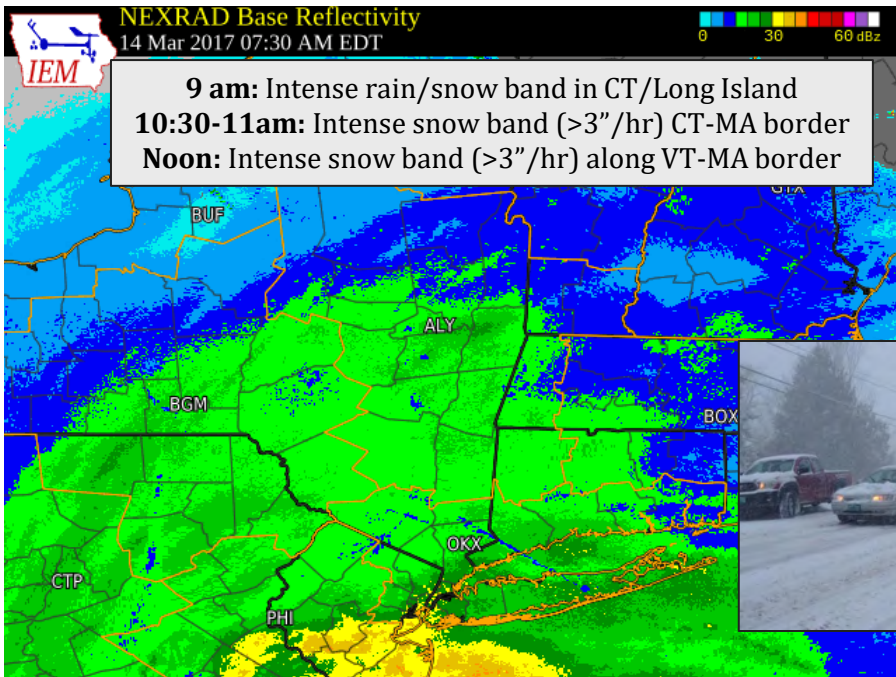
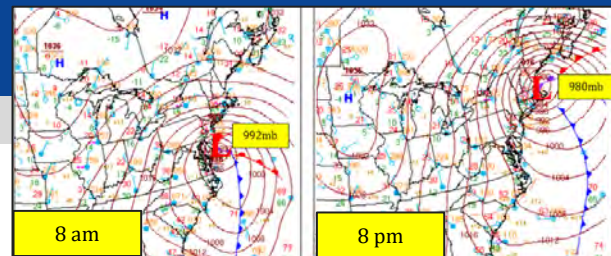




# Pi-Day Storm 2017 (3/14 – 3/15/2017)

Messaging 1-2+ inch/hr snowfall rates during the afternoon into evening commutes...up to two days in advance.

**That Day – “Stay off the road!”**







# Pi-Day Storm 2017 (3/14 – 3/15/2017)

Date	Storm Total Snowfall Amount
January 2-3, 2010	33.1"
March 14-15, 2017	30.4"
December 25-28, 1969	29.8"
March 6-7, 2011	25.8"
February 14-15, 2007	25.7"
January 13-14, 1934	24.7"
March 5-6, 2011	22.9"
March 13-14, 1993	22.4"
November 25, 1900	20.0"
January 25-28, 1986	19.7"

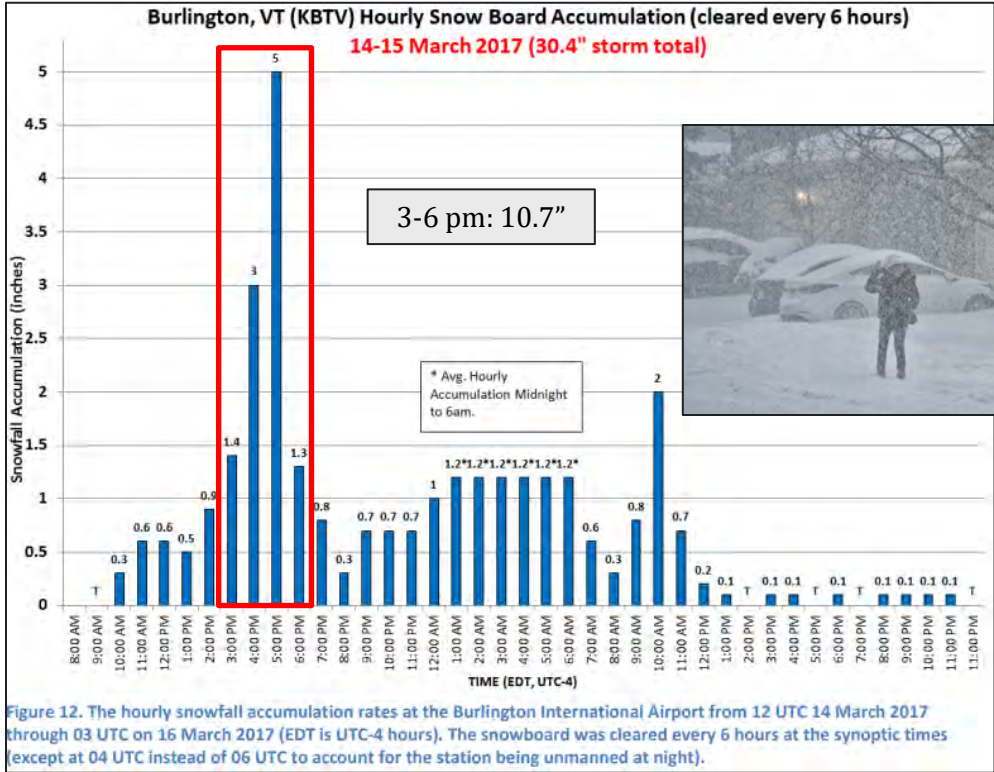
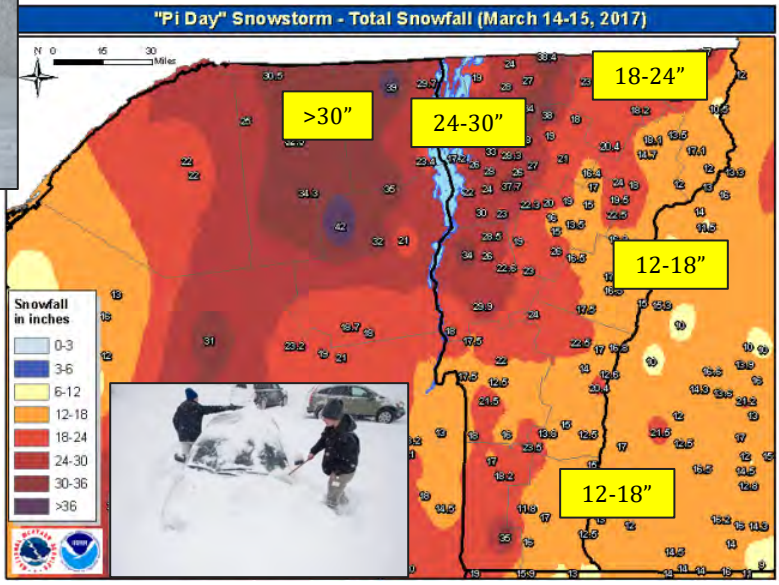


Figure 12. The hourly snowfall accumulation rates at the Burlington International Airport from 12 UTC 14 March 2017 through 03 UTC on 16 March 2017 (EDT is UTC-4 hours). The snowboard was cleared every 6 hours at the synoptic times (except at 04 UTC instead of 06 UTC to account for the station being unmanned at night).

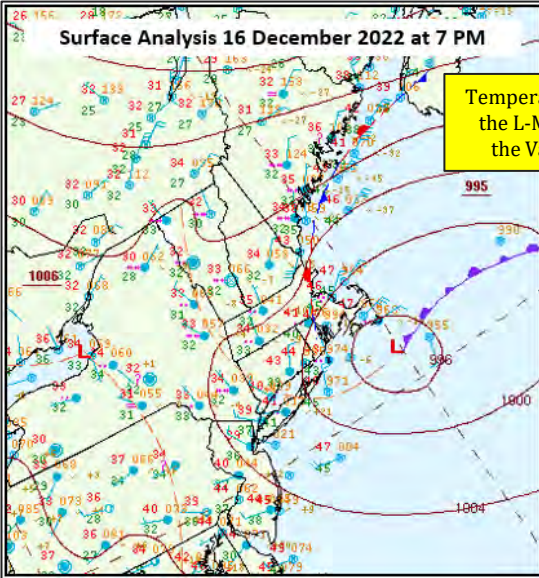




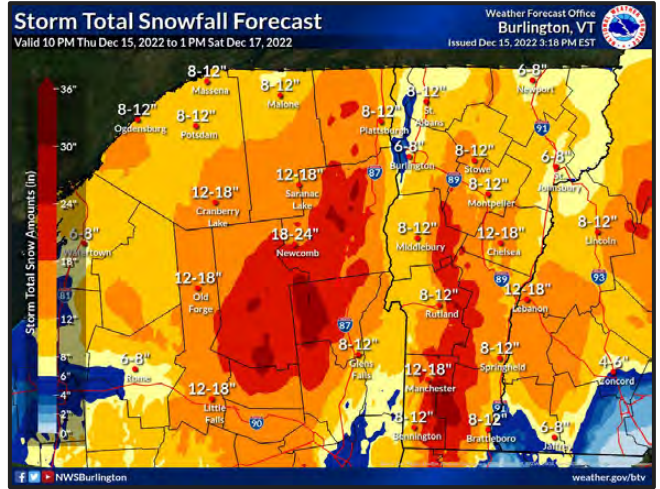
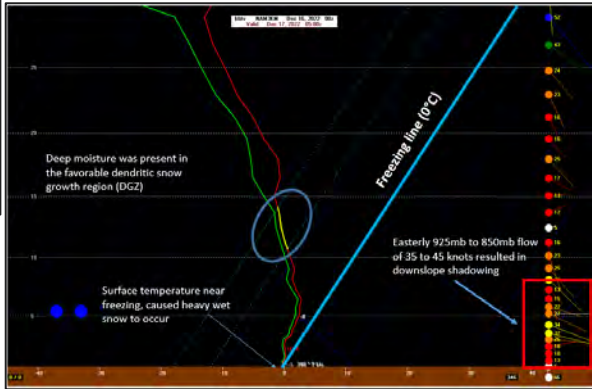


# Early/Late Season WET Snowfalls – Dec 15-17, 2022 / March 14-15, 2023

**WET, Heavy Snow = Power Outages**    **DRY, Powdery Snow = Poor visibility, potential drifting**



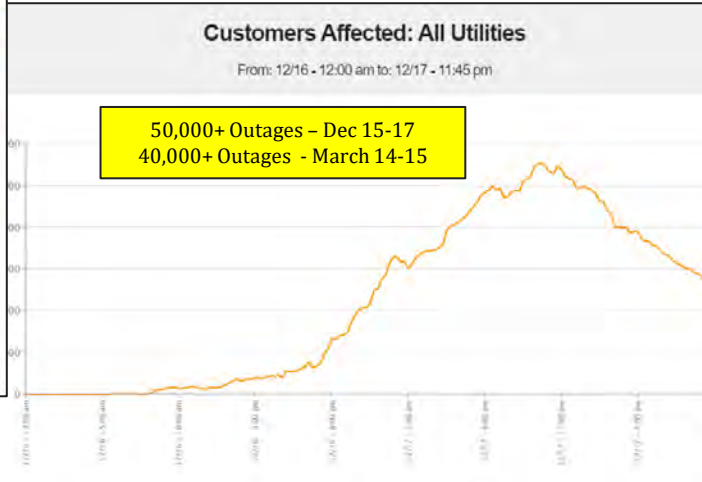
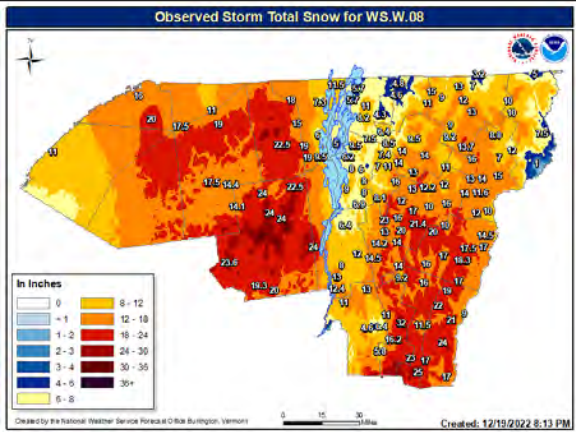
Temperatures in the L-M30s in the Valleys



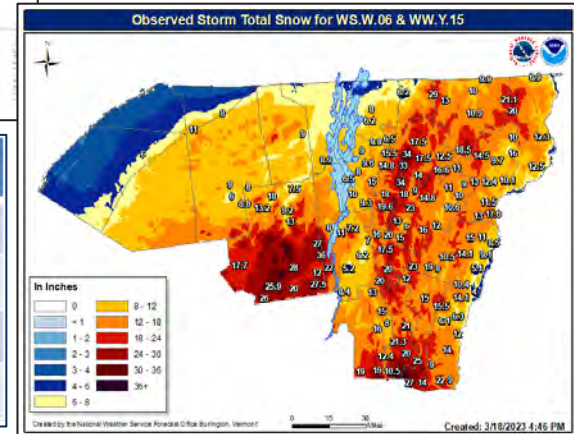
WET Snow Accumulation	Potential Impacts assuming a Snow/Water Ratio 10:1 or less
< 5 inches	Some weighted tree limbs of Conifers and fully leafed trees
5-10 inches (WE 5-1")	Numerous weighted tree limbs and some power lines. Isolated to scattered outages possible.
10-15 inches (WE 1-1.5")	Weighted/snapped tree limbs, especially fully leafed trees. Scattered to Numerous power outages likely.
> 15 inches (WE > 1.5")	Numerous downed tree limbs and some snapped trees. Widespread power outages.



# Early/Late Season WET Snowfalls – Dec 15-17, 2022 / March 14-15, 2023



WET Snow Accumulation	Potential Impacts assuming a Snow/Water Ratio 10:1 or less
< 5 inches	Some weighted tree limbs of Conifers and fully leafed trees
5-10 inches (WE 5-1")	Numerous weighted tree limbs and some power lines. Isolated to scattered outages possible.
10-15 inches (WE 1-1.5")	Weighted/snapped tree limbs, especially fully leafed trees. Scattered to Numerous power outages likely.
> 15 inches (WE > 1.5")	Numerous downed tree limbs and some snapped trees. Widespread power outages.

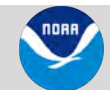
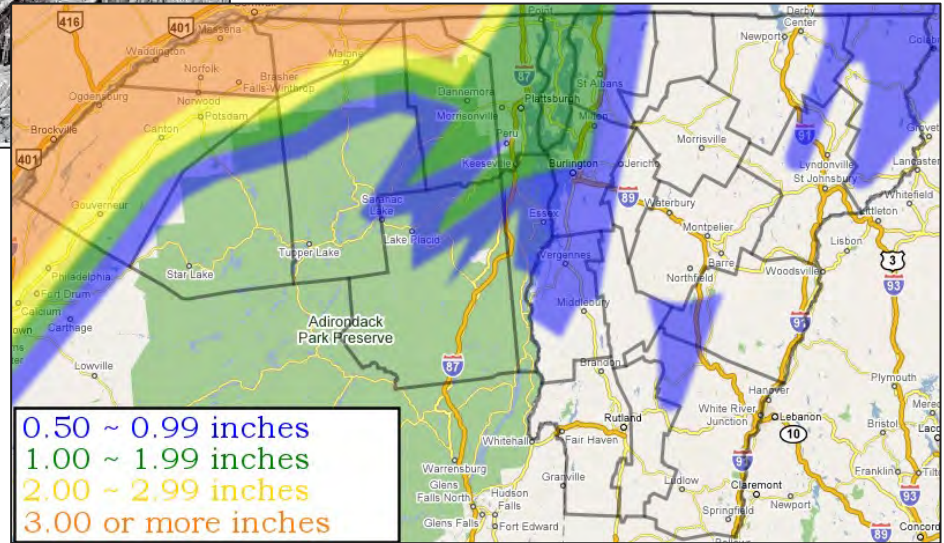






# Ice Storm – January 1998

<https://www.weather.gov/media/btv/events/IceStorm1998.pdf>



National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

U.S. Department of Commerce

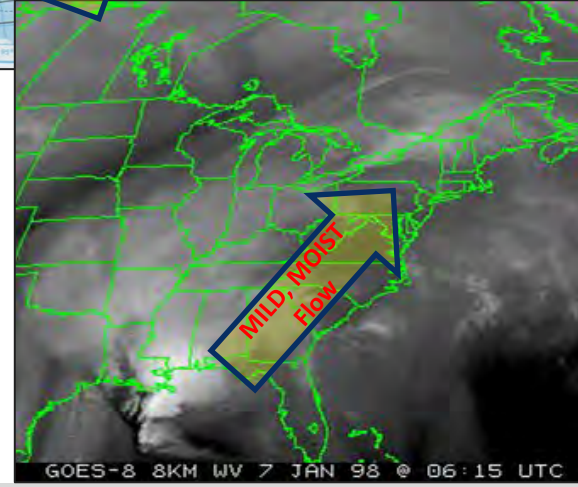
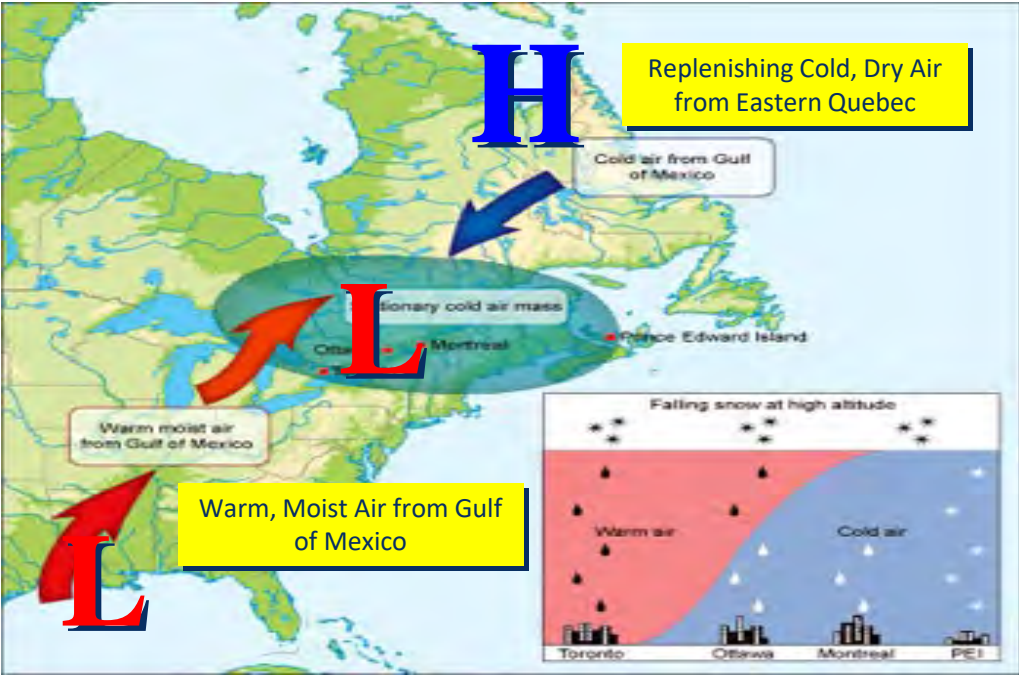
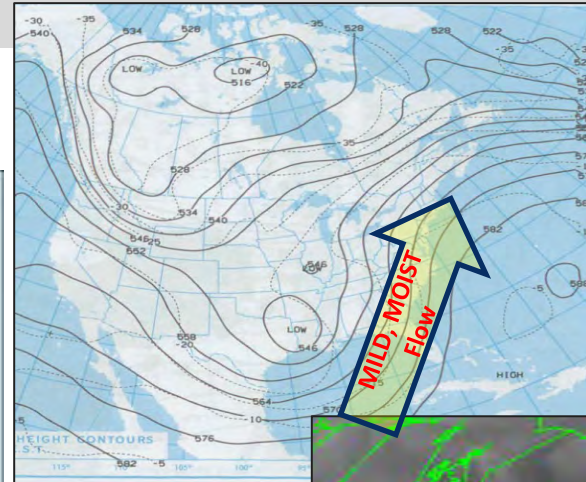
Burlington Weather Forecast Office





# Synoptic Overview - January 7-10, 1998

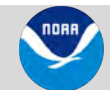
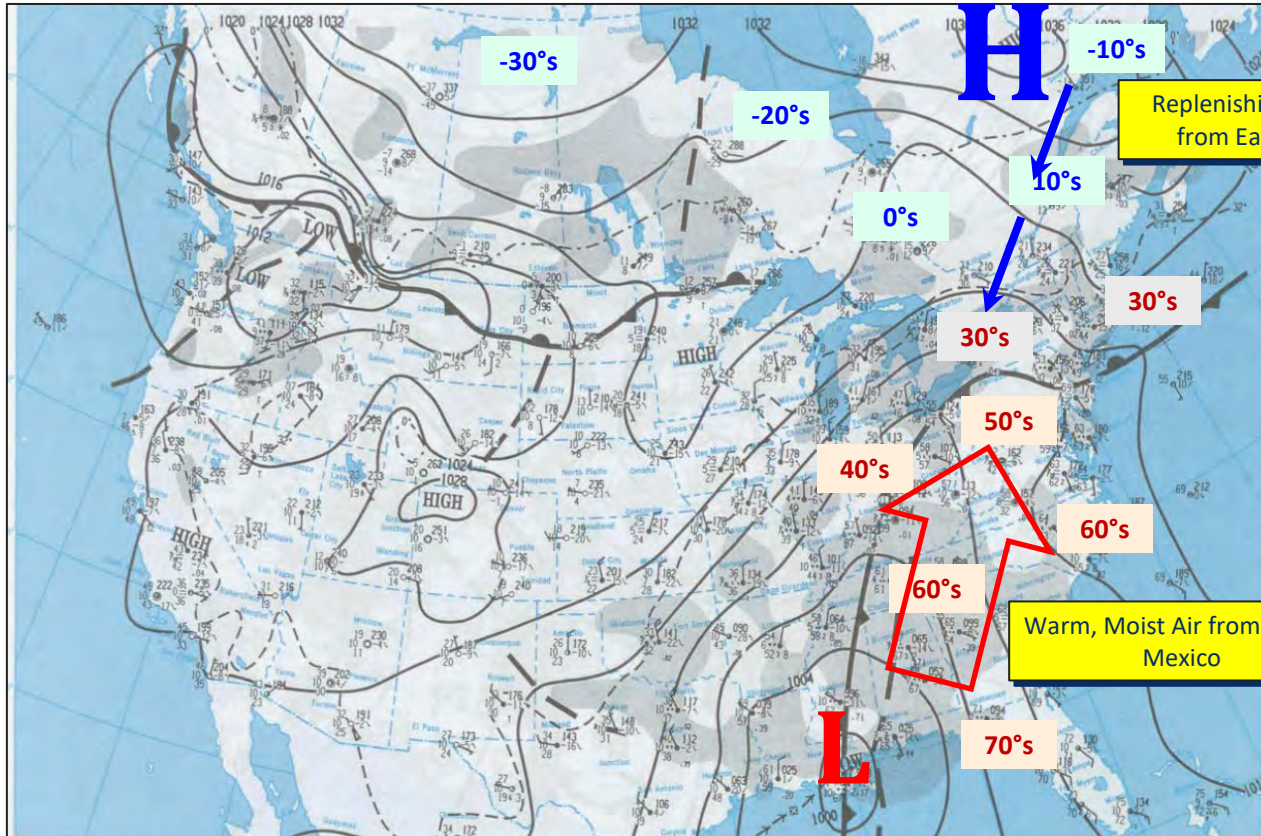
**ICE Storms are the least frequent winter hazard in VT/NY.**  
**Ice Storm of 1998 is likely a 50-100 year Event.**



GOES-8 8KM WV 7 JAN 98 @ 06:15 UTC



# Surface Map - January 7, 1998

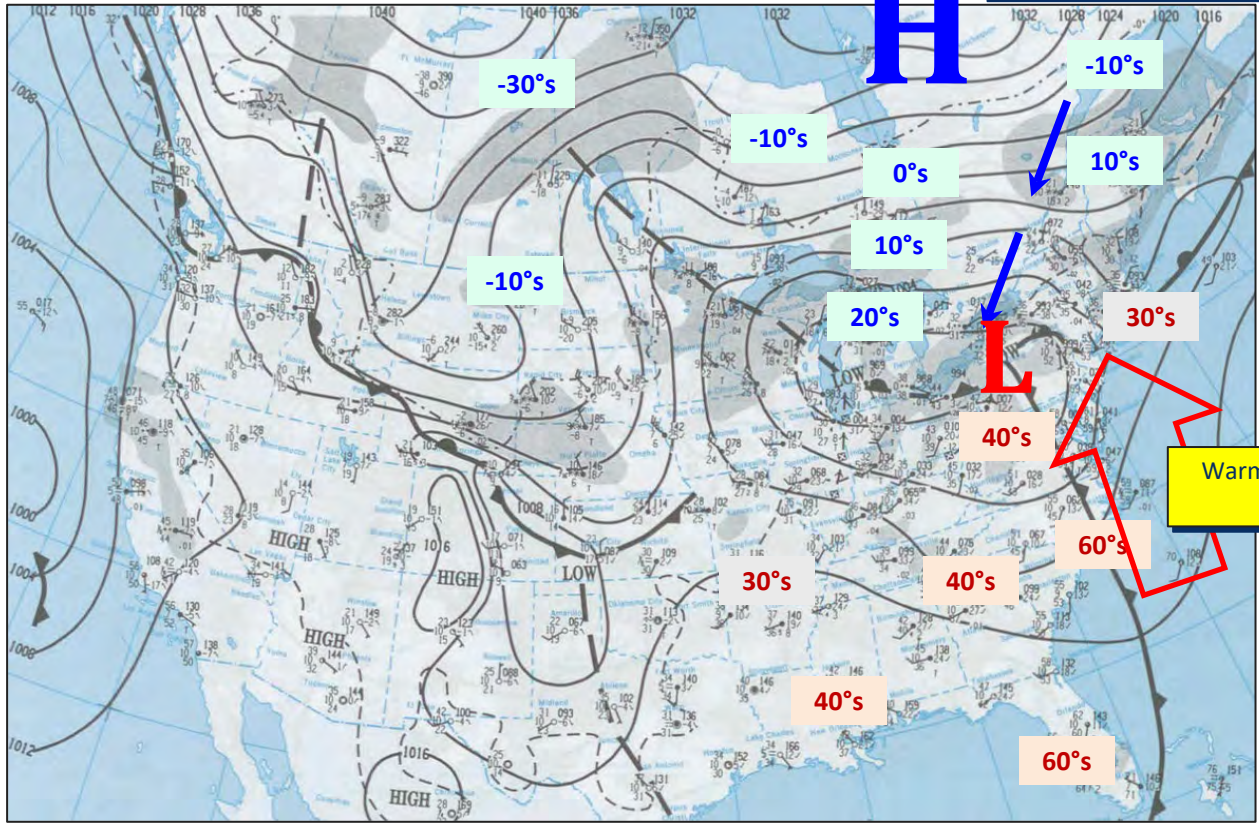




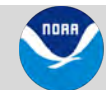


# Surface Map - January 9, 1998

Replenishing Cold, Dry Air from Eastern Quebec



Warm, Moist Air from the Atlantic

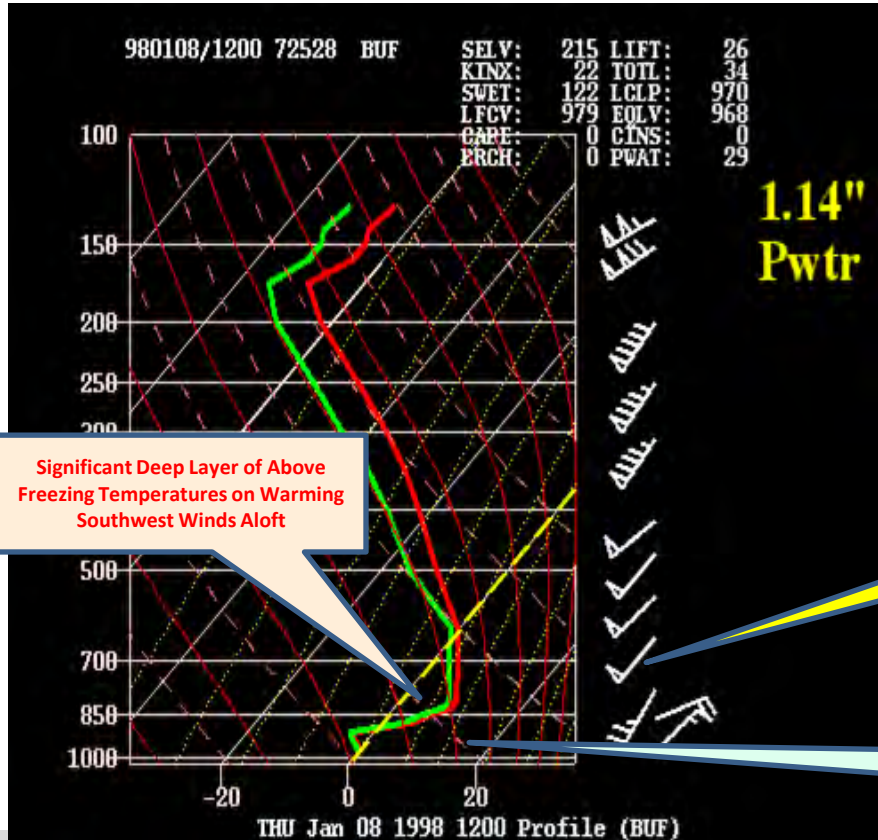






# BUF Sounding

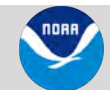
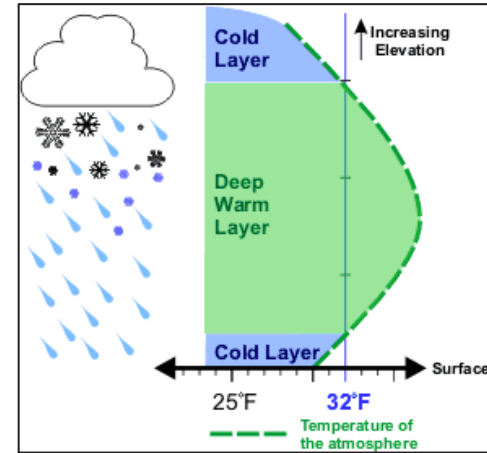
## Vertical Temperature Profiles for Determining Precipitation Type



Significant Deep Layer of Above Freezing Temperatures on Warming Southwest Winds Aloft

Strong Winds above 8000 feet with Mild/Warm Air and Deep Moisture

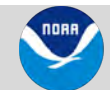
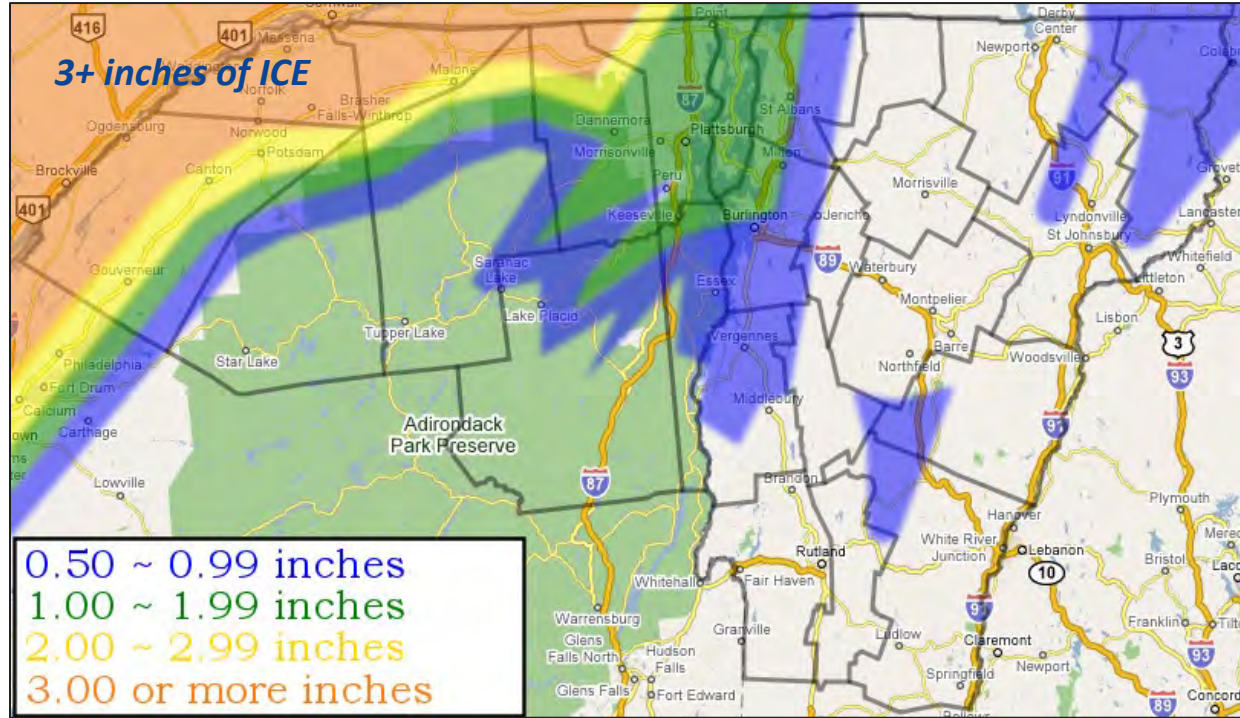
Moderately COLD Northeast Winds in the lowest 1000-1500 feet





# Ice Storm – January 1998

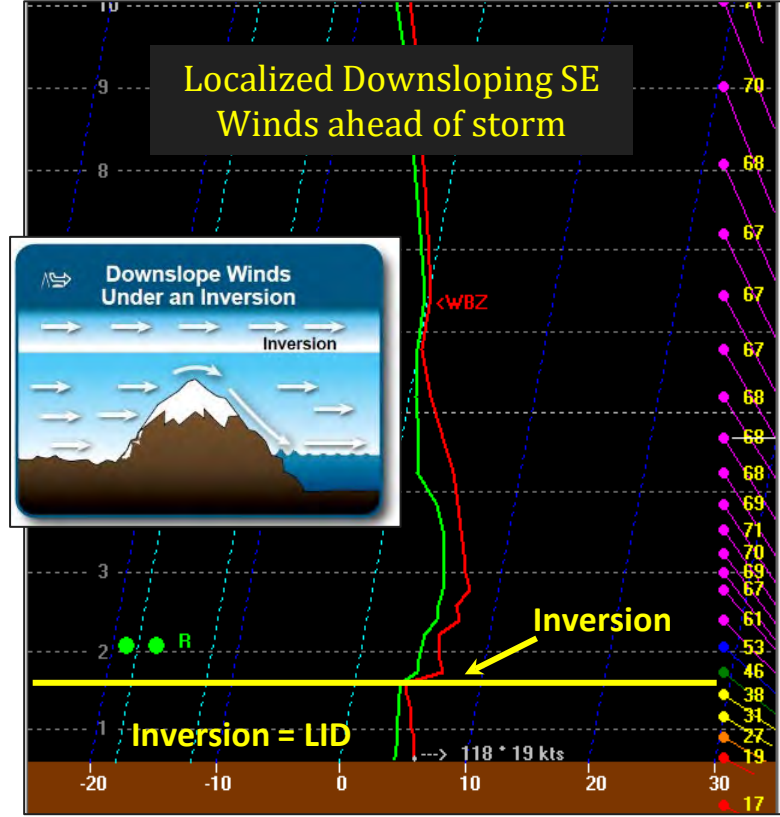
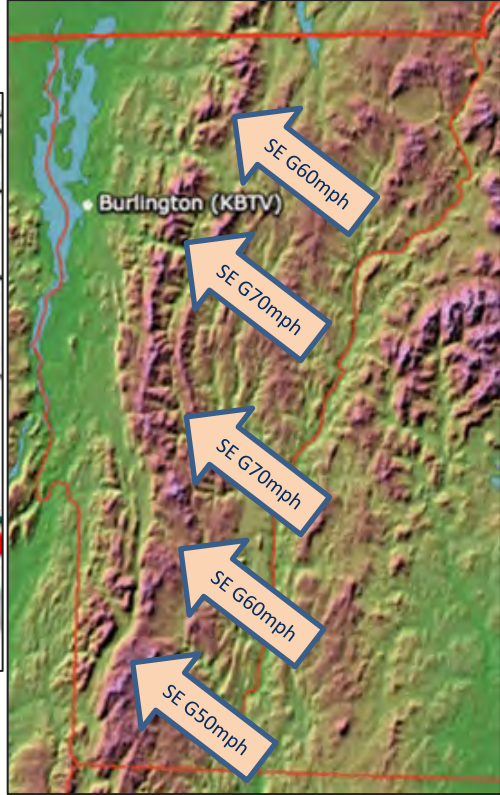
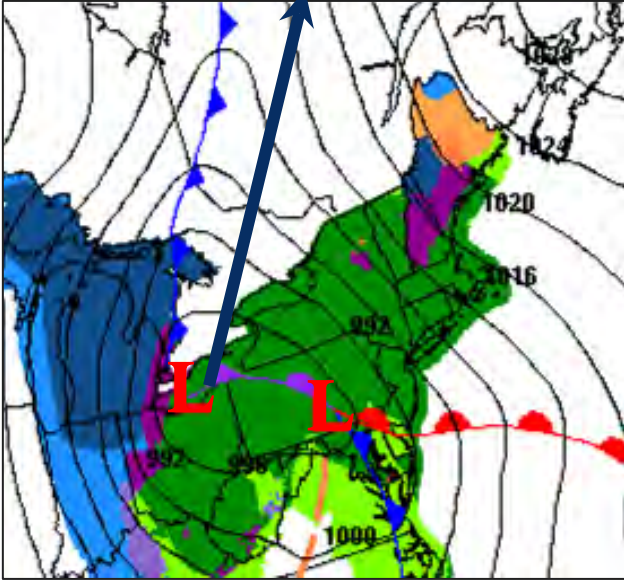
<http://www.weather.gov/media/btv/events/IceStorm1998.pdf>







# Climatology/Ingredients of Downsloping Damaging Winds







# December 23, 2022 Wind and Flash Freeze



**Vermont State Police** @VTStatePolice

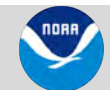
VSP responded to 73 weather-related crashes from 12:01AM Friday to 11:59PM Sunday: 32 Friday, 21 Saturday, 20 Sunday. Eleven involved reports of injuries; 21 occurred on Vermont's two interstates. As always, remember to slow down, leave extra time, increase following distance.



Strong to damaging winds of 50-65 mph on Friday.

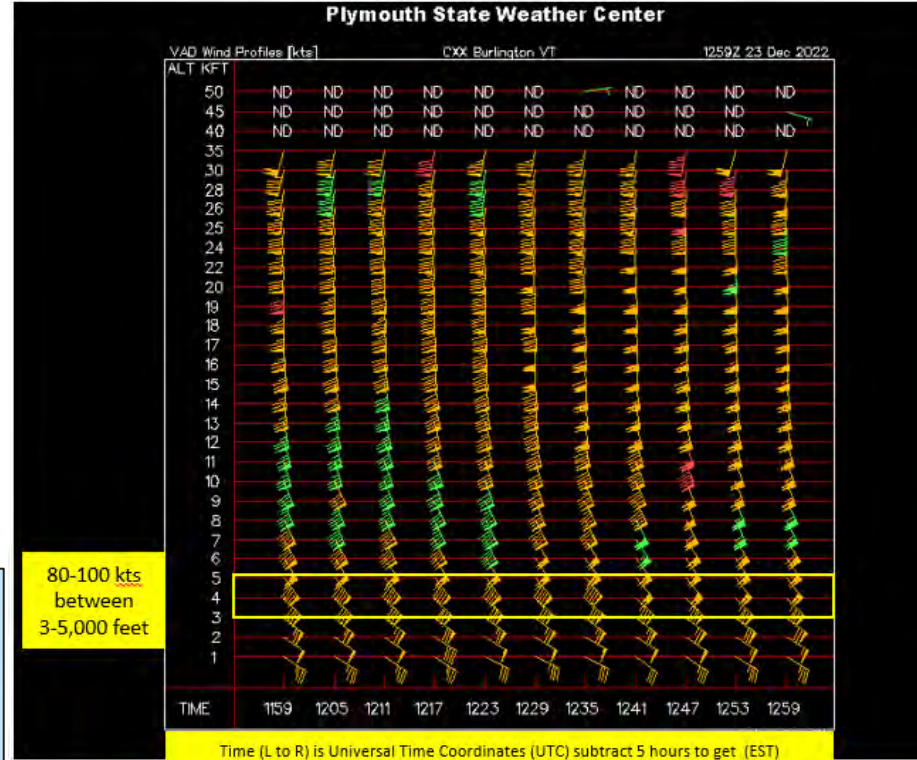
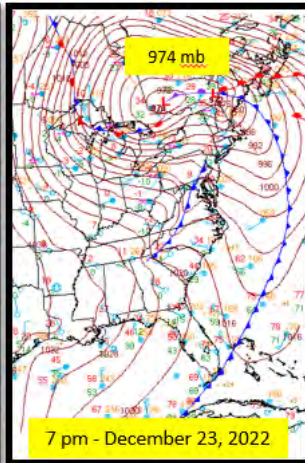
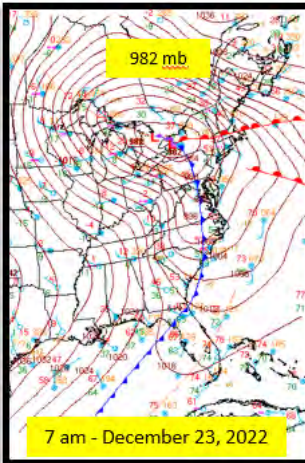
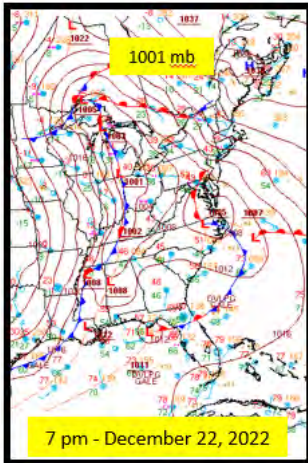


Rapidly falling temperatures and flash freeze likely Friday afternoon/evening.







# December 23, 2022 Wind



80-100 kts  
between  
3-5,000 feet

 Strong to damaging winds of 50-65 mph on Friday.

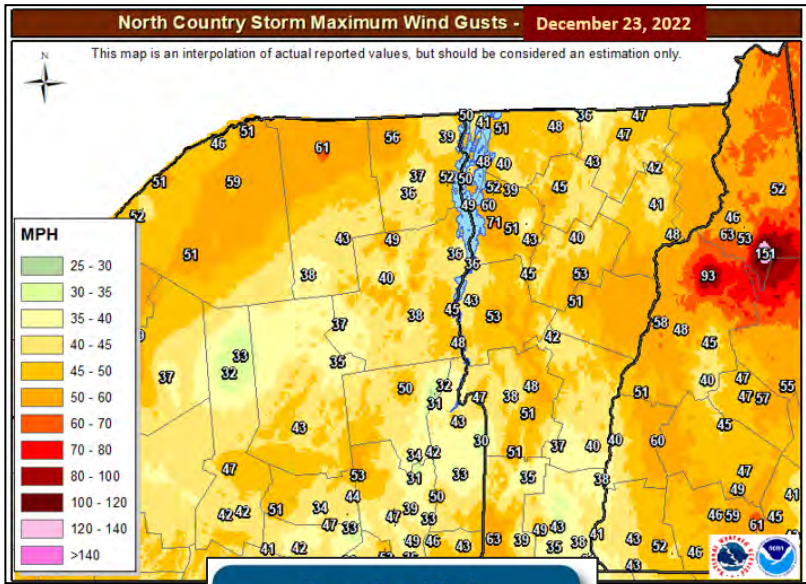
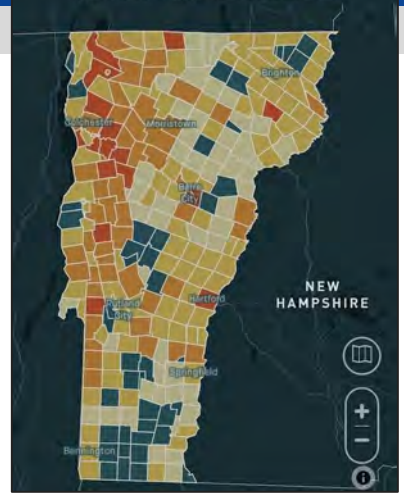
 Rapidly falling temperatures and flash freeze likely Friday afternoon/evening.





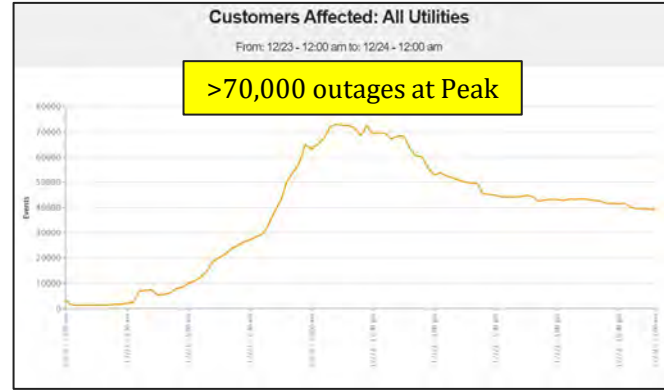
# December 23, 2022 Wind

1189 Events 64427 Customers Affected



## Mount Mansfield Observations

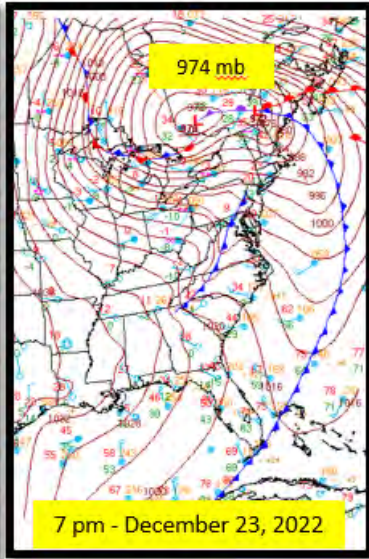
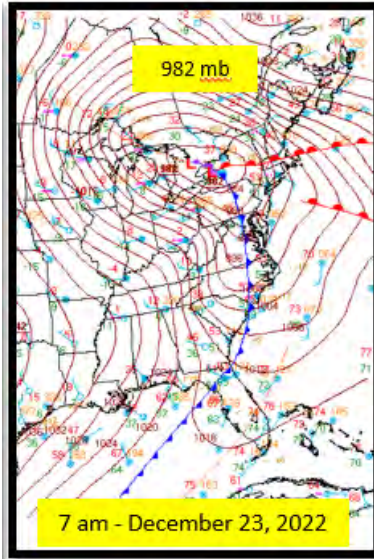
Date/Time (L)	Temp (°F)	Wind Chill (°F)	Wind Direction	Wind Speed (mph)
Dec 23, 10:40 am	37	22	ESE	43G58
Dec 23, 10:35 am	37	22	ESE	46G80
Dec 23, 10:30 am	37	20	ESE	59G77
Dec 23, 10:25 am	36	19	ESE	60G94
Dec 23, 10:20 am	36	20	ESE	53G79
Dec 23, 10:15 am	36	20	ESE	50G75
Dec 23, 10:10 am	36	19	ESE	55G79
Dec 23, 10:05 am	35	18	ESE	55G77
Dec 23, 10:00 am	35	19	ESE	50G70
Dec 23, 9:55 am	34	17	ESE	53G87
Dec 23, 9:50 am	34	16	ESE	59G101
Dec 23, 9:45 am	33	13	ESE	73G101
Dec 23, 9:40 am	33	13	ESE	70G110
Dec 23, 9:35 am	33	12	ESE	78G113
Dec 23, 9:30 am	33	13	ESE	76G104
Dec 23, 9:25 am	33	13	ESE	70G102
Dec 23, 9:20 am	33	14	ESE	67G114
Dec 23, 9:15 am	33	13	ESE	70G100
Dec 23, 9:10 am	33	13	ESE	72G107
Dec 23, 9:05 am	33	13	ESE	71G130
Dec 23, 9:00 am	33	15	E	56G114
Dec 23, 8:55 am	33	15	E	55G112
Dec 23, 8:50 am	33	13	E	75G107
Dec 23, 8:45 am	33	13	E	71G103
Dec 23, 8:40 am	33	13	E	71G89
Dec 23, 8:35 am	33	14	E	67G86
Dec 23, 8:30 am	33	13	E	72G101
Dec 23, 8:25 am	33	14	E	65G99
Dec 23, 8:20 am	33	12	E	65G118
Dec 23, 8:15 am	33	14	E	61G84
Dec 23, 8:10 am	33	13	E	68G95
Dec 23, 8:05 am	33	13	E	71G92
Dec 23, 8:00 am	33	13	E	68G89







# December 23, 2022 Flash Freeze



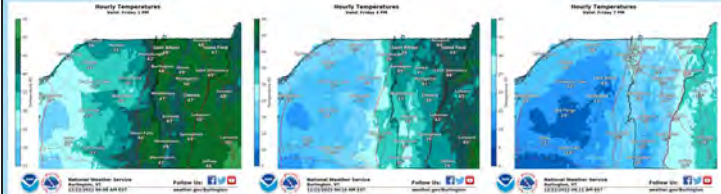
Strong to damaging winds of 50-65 mph on Friday.



Rapidly falling temperatures and flash freeze likely Friday afternoon/evening.

## Rapidly Falling Temperatures Friday

- ✓ Temperatures will rapidly fall below freezing between 1-7 PM Friday from west to east.
- ✓ The potential for a flash freeze appears likely at this time with rapidly falling temperatures and rain changing to snow.



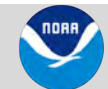
## Flash Freeze Likely This Afternoon

- ✓ Temperatures will rapidly fall below freezing between 1-7 PM today from west to east.
- ✓ Flash freeze is likely with rapidly falling temperatures and rain changing to snow.

### Hourly Temperature Forecast (F)

	12/23 Fri												
	11am	12pm	1pm	2pm	3pm	4pm	5pm	6pm	7pm	8pm	9pm	10pm	11pm
Burlington	47	47	47	45	42	36	33	29	26	23	20	18	16
Cambridge	48	49	48	47	45	43	37	31	28	24	21	17	15
Jericho	48	49	48	46	44	41	36	29	27	23	20	18	16
Lake Placid	44	44	41	37	32	25	22	17	15	12	9	7	6
Malden	44	44	42	39	37	27	25	21	18	16	15	11	10
Massena	41	41	40	36	32	28	26	23	21	19	18	16	15
Middlebury	33	31	49	46	43	39	36	28	27	23	20	18	16
Milton	49	50	49	47	44	41	36	30	27	24	22	18	16
Montpelier	46	46	48	47	45	43	37	30	27	22	19	16	13
Newport	45	46	46	46	46	45	40	36	33	29	24	21	18
Plattsburgh	45	45	45	43	41	36	32	28	25	22	20	18	17
Rutland	50	49	47	45	42	38	33	26	25	21	18	15	14
Saint Albans	48	48	47	47	44	41	36	30	27	25	22	19	17
Saint Johnsbury	46	48	48	48	47	45	40	36	34	28	24	21	18
Springfield	50	49	45	44	43	40	35	29	27	23	20	17	15
Stowe	46	47	47	46	45	43	37	31	27	22	20	17	15
Waterbury	47	48	48	46	45	42	36	30	28	23	20	17	14
Williston	48	49	48	46	44	41	35	29	27	23	21	17	15

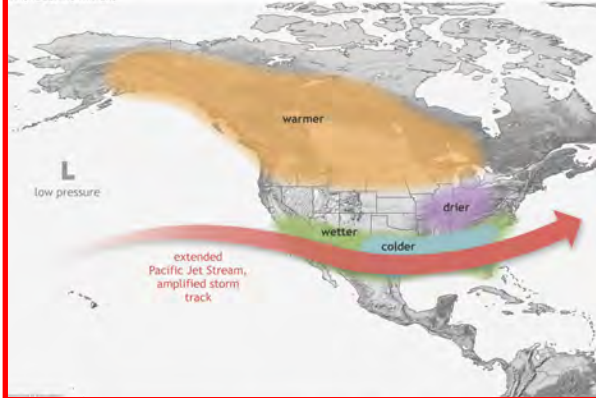
\*Table values in °F  
 \*\*Created: 4 am EST Fri 12/23/2022  
 \*\*\*Values are maximums over the period beginning at the time shown.



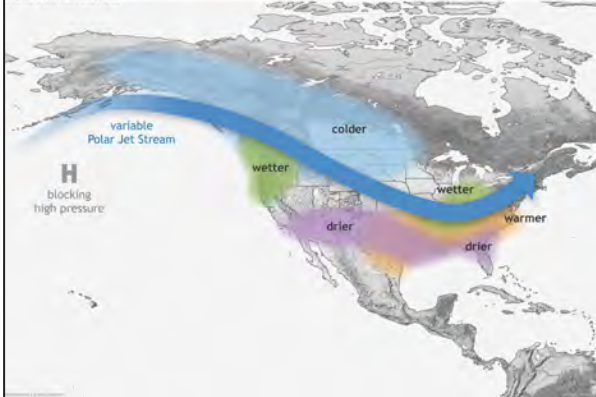


# Winter 2023-24?

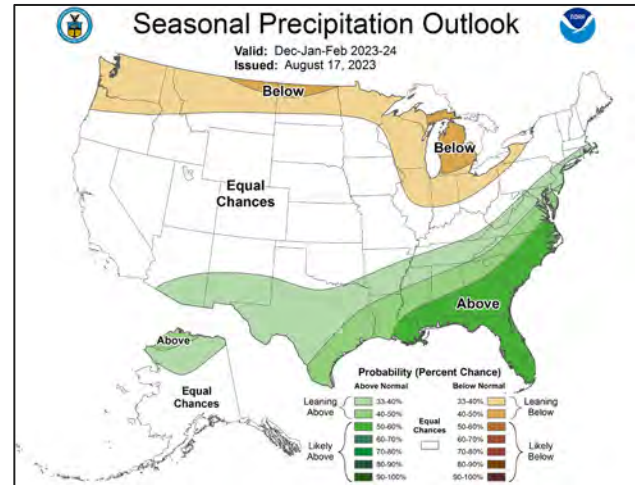
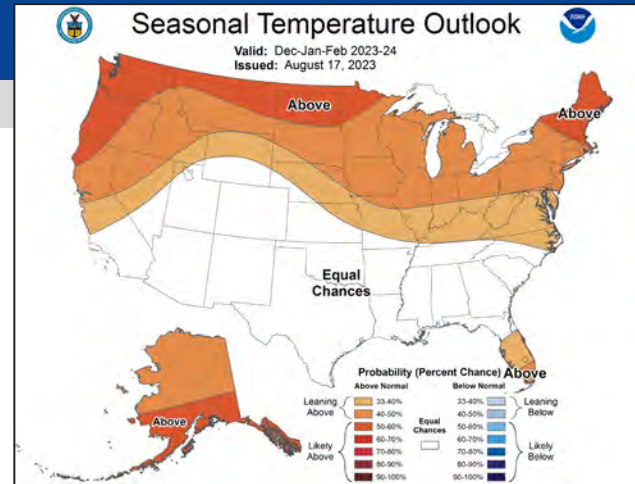
TYPICAL EL NIÑO WINTERS



TYPICAL LA NIÑA WINTERS



Rank	Season	Mean Avg Temperature
1	2015-2016	SE 30.1
2	2016-2017	WL 29.5
3	2022-2023	WL 29.0
4	2001-2002	N 28.7
5	2011-2012	ML 27.8
6	1932-1933	NA 27.5
7	1905-1906	NA 27.3
8	1936-1937	NA 26.3
9	2019-2020	N 26.1
10	1931-1932	NA 25.9





# Questions?

- NWS Burlington webpage – [www.weather.gov/btv](http://www.weather.gov/btv)

- NWS Burlington Winter Webpage - [www.weather.gov/btv/winter](http://www.weather.gov/btv/winter)



- **If you need to reach a forecaster 24/7, then please use the following contacts.** 802-658-0150 or [nwsbtv.info@noaa.gov](mailto:nwsbtv.info@noaa.gov)
- Scott Whittier – [scott.whittier@noaa.gov](mailto:scott.whittier@noaa.gov)

