

Heavy snow makes for third-snowiest winter of all time in Twin Cities

April 3 2023, by Tim Harlow and Kyeland Jackson



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Under a strong sun that teased of warmer days to come, winter-weary Minnesotans spent Saturday digging out from yet another snowstorm.

Muscle power was necessary to move the moisture-laden [snow](#), which

took down tree branches, felled [power lines](#) and left many roads still snow covered even by the sunnier midday.

The 8.5 inches of snow that fell at the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport made this the third snowiest winter of all time. And [weather forecasters](#) are warning that another dumping could come by the middle of next week.

It's all too much for Patrick Honeycutt, of Rosemount, who woke up to the winter wonderland and had the task of plowing himself out. Last week he was in his native Mississippi where it was 85 degrees.

"It tested the snowblower," he said. "I was thinking this was a cruel April Fool's joke."

"Hopefully it will melt soon." Honeycutt added, noting the start of his daughter's high school softball season will be even further delayed.

The weight of the snow toppled an inflatable sports dome just blocks from his home, leaving spring sports teams that use it without a place to practice. A steel cable snapped causing a rip in the fabric, said Lee Stoffel, communications coordinator for Rosemount.

"It will require a patch, but they (the owners) are optimistic they will be able to get it back up and running quickly," she said.

Thousands across the metro remained without power as Xcel Energy crews worked to restore service. That didn't stop Saturday services at St. Albert the Great Church in south Minneapolis. Without electricity to power the boiler, the Rev. Jude McPeak advised parishioners to dress warmly.

"Hopefully it will be light enough," said McPeak, who personally

shoveled off the steps leading to the church. "We do have flashlights and can bring in candles."

Some people, like 24-year-old Caleb Sanchez, thought the snow would only bring minor delays. But after spending nearly a half-hour trying to get his car out of the parking lot at his building in southeast Minneapolis, he called friends from nearby to help.

"To be honest, I thought it was going to be fine (out). I didn't have too many car troubles this winter," Sanchez said. "But this is some really packy, wet snow that makes it real easy to lose tread. You just can't get the friction that you want."

Crews from the Minnesota Department of Transportation had difficulties, too. Rain that turned to slush-coated roads, which were then covered with snow. That left some freeways with that washboard effect even as a full complement of plows tried to scrape them clean.

"It became a challenge and it takes time," said Anne Meyer, a MnDOT spokeswoman. "The sun was a huge ally and made for a huge turnaround."

By late evening, metro highways were mainly wet, and even dry in some places.

Residential streets didn't fare quite as well. Neither Minneapolis nor St. Paul called a snow emergency or enacted parking restrictions. Plows were dispatched to clear main arteries and the roads leading to them first, [city officials](#) said in social media posts.

Efforts were hampered in St. Paul where the forestry division was removing scores of branches and trees blocking roads, spokeswoman Lisa Hiebert said.

"We have had several hundred calls," she said. Plows were put to their paces, too. "Wet heavy (snow) always is harder to plow and move around, especially with a lot still out there."

Residential streets in the capital city "are messy and hard to navigate in spots," but drivers were able to get through for the most part, Hiebert said.

The snow was still causing problems for Metro Transit. At 5 p.m. Saturday, 19% of its buses were running late.

Operations at Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport had returned to normal by Saturday afternoon, spokesman John Welbes said.

Earlier in the day, travelers trying to escape to warmer destinations were caught in long lines. Airport staff had trouble getting into work, which led to a crowded lobby, Welbes said.

There had been 328 flights coming or going from MSP delayed as of 6 p.m. Saturday and 156 canceled, according to the flight tracking website flightaware.com.

Xcel Energy reported about 40,000 customers in the metro area and parts of southern Minnesota and western Wisconsin had lost power. By late Saturday afternoon, that number had dropped to about 28,000, the utility reported.

The Minnesota State Patrol reported 346 crashes statewide from 4:30 p.m. Friday to 11:30 a.m. Saturday, plus 629 spinouts and 18 jackknifed semitrailer trucks.

Oakdale and Hudson, Wis., got the most snow in the metro area at 13 inches each. Close behind were Woodbury, Monticello and Medina with

12 inches.

"When I woke up and I looked outside I was just like, 'Oh my god, all this snow everywhere,'" said 16-year-old Rajon Davis, who lives in the Como neighborhood of Minneapolis. "I'm thinking we're in spring, but God had other plans for us on April Fools' Day I guess."

Despite many of its inconveniences, some people welcomed the deluge of snow. Buck Hill in Burnsville was open Saturday for rare April skiing.

"It's been really busy," employee Emma Hartong said. "The [parking lot](#) is full."

Outside in Minneapolis on Saturday afternoon, Michelle and Robert McKay, 74 and 58, said the snow brings beauty out of the Twin Cities and its residents.

"It didn't affect me at all, I kind of enjoy it actually. It looks very pretty outside," Michelle McKay said. "It also shows Minnesotans banding together to help everybody out if they're stuck, or if you need shoveling or whatever it is. It brings our community together in a way."

When told that more inclement weather could hit Minnesota next week, a smile crossed Robert's face. He replied, "Good. I hope we set the record."

The season began with just a trace of snow on Oct. 13, and the Twin Cities has seen 89.3 inches since, the National Weather Service said.

Another system moving into the Upper Midwest on Tuesday could up that total and threaten to surpass 95 inches that fell in the winter of 1981-82. That is the second snowiest on record, with the all-time mark set when 98.6 inches fell in 1983-84.

"There is a lot of uncertainty" of how much we will get, said meteorologist Chris O'Brien. "The track will be crucial."

But those pining for spring can have hope.

"This looks like the last one," O'Brien said.

Temperatures are expected to moderate into the 50s for the first time this year over Easter weekend, O'Brien said.

2023 StarTribune.

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Citation: Heavy snow makes for third-snowiest winter of all time in Twin Cities (2023, April 3) retrieved 16 August 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2023-04-heavy-third-snowiest-winter-twin-cities.html>

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