

Michigan Committee for Severe Weather Awareness
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WINTER HAZARDS AWARENESS WEEK IS NOVEMBER 12-18

LANSING – To focus attention on winter safety precautions, Gov. Jennifer M. Granholm has declared Nov. 12 - 18 as Winter Hazards Awareness Week in Michigan. Heavy snow, extreme cold, ice and wind routinely affect Michigan and can pose dangers to life and property. Michigan residents must remember it does not take record-breaking low temperatures or mountains of snow to make winter dangerous. Abrupt changes in weather are enough to turn enjoyment of the season into tragedy.

“Michigan winters can be severe, so preparedness, awareness and common sense are always important,” said Capt. Eddie L. Washington, commander of the Michigan State Police Emergency Management & Homeland Security Division. “During Winter Hazards Awareness Week, I encourage Michigan residents to learn of the dangers associated with cold, snow and ice, as well as threats posed by the use of heat sources such as wood burning stoves, fireplaces and space heaters.”

According to the Michigan Committee for Severe Weather Awareness, Michigan’s 2005 - 2006 winter season was warmer than usual, but most locations still received average snowfall and frequent storms with accompanying wind, rain, ice and snow were not uncommon. Temperatures ranged from 3 to 6 degrees above normal throughout the winter, but these averages only tell part of the story. The winter started off cold with an arctic air mass on Thanksgiving weekend. The arctic air remained for the first three weeks of December before a significant warm up in January. January was one of the warmest months on record and was the main reason temperatures averaged 3 to 6 degrees above normal. The season ended with temperatures closer to average for February and March.

During fall, it is typical for strong storms to move through the Great Lakes region. These storms are the reason for the phrase, “The Gales of November.” In 2005, four strong storms moved through the Great Lakes during the first two weeks of November causing over \$15 million in damages. Each storm produced wind gusts in excess 60 mph, damaging trees and buildings and causing tens of thousands of power outages.

The first winter storm of the season hit parts of the Upper Peninsula and Northwest Lower Peninsula with heavy, wet snowfall on Nov. 15 - 17. Most of the snowfall was heavy lake effect snow that resulted in over a foot of snow in the snow belts. Just before Thanksgiving, an arctic front moved through the state

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with bitterly cold winds that gusted up to 50 mph for the holiday weekend. The cold air also brought a round of heavy lake effect snow to the Upper Peninsula and Northwest Lower Peninsula where 12 to 18 inches of snow fell in lake effect areas.

During December, two winter storms affected much of the Lower Peninsula. The storms hit on December 9 and 15 with each storm averaging 6 to 12 inches of snow.

The month of January usually produces the coldest temperatures and most severe storms, but in January 2006 there were only two winter storms. The first storm occurred on Jan. 20 - 21, dropping 6 to 12 inches of snow on most of the Lower Peninsula. The second storm on Jan. 24-25 was a strong Alberta Clipper that moved through Lake Superior leaving parts of the Upper Peninsula and Northwest Lower Peninsula covered by up to 12 inches of snow.

February brought two of the strongest storms of the 2005 – 2006 winter season. The first, referred to as the Super Bowl Storm, occurred February 4 - 5, which was the same weekend the City of Detroit was hosting Super Bowl XL. During this storm, the Lower Peninsula was blanketed in 4 to 12 inches of snow with a maximum of 18 inches in the Northeast Lower Peninsula. The heavy, wet snow downed power lines and left tens of thousands of Michigan residents without power.

By far, the most significant winter storm occurred on Feb. 16 - 17. This storm produced snow across Upper and Northern Lower Michigan, an ice storm across Central Lower Michigan and severe thunderstorms across Southern Lower Michigan. Thunder accompanied the snow and ice across Northern and Central Lower Michigan. Ice accumulated up to an inch on trees, power lines and buildings across Central Lower Michigan leaving over 100,000 customers without power, some for several days, and causing over \$2 million in damages.

The season ended with a winter storm across Central Lower Michigan on March 2 and one last strong storm on March 13 - 14. The mid-March storm produced over 30 inches of snow in parts of the Western Upper Peninsula. This storm also produced winds up to 60 mph across Southern Lower Michigan, causing two fatalities, as trees fell on cars in Lansing and Oakland County.

For more information on how to prepare for severe weather, visit the Michigan Committee for Severe Weather Awareness web site at www.mcswa.org. The Michigan Committee for Severe Weather Awareness was formed in 1991. Its mission is to provide information and advice that keeps Michigan residents prepared when severe weather strikes.

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