

Spring Snow Hits Rockies; Plains Face High Winds **News**

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DENVER (AP) -- Dozens of snowplows were taking to the streets of Denver early Monday, after a powerful spring storm dropped heavy snow across parts of Colorado and Wyoming, even as stormy weather moved into the plains states and drew warnings about conditions ripe for severe thunderstorm and tornadoes.



The Mother's Day storm dropped more than a foot of sloppy, wet snow on parts of the two states. The National Weather Service issued a winter storm warning for most of northern Colorado and parts of southern Wyoming for all of Sunday and for Monday morning.

Forecasters warned that instability ahead of the cold front created conditions for damaging winds as thunderstorms and tornadoes developed in Nebraska Sunday and threatened to push south. The storm also created high winds across the West.

Powerful thunderstorms produced tornadoes as they moved across Nebraska on Sunday caused damage in several towns and rural areas in the east of the state. Officials said the storms damaged homes and businesses in or near Sutton, Garland, Cordova and Daykin, and knocked out power to 18,000 utility customers. Large hail and strong winds seen in the state were expected to head south into Kansas, and a tornado watch was issued for parts of Oklahoma.

The storm was expected to weaken as it heads northeast from the Plains, possibly bringing rain as it moves into the Great Lakes, the weather service said.

Kyle Fredin, a meteorologist for the weather service in Boulder, said the weather pattern is typical for this time of year, and "it's going to be kind of the same thing pretty much through the end of June."

And the storm brought picturesque scenes to some areas.

"We got about a foot of snow and all the trees are covered. It looks like a beautiful painting," said Janie Robertson, owner of the Dripping Springs Resort B&B in Estes Park.

In Colorado, Department of Transportation officials said plunging temperatures and snow created icy road conditions, and multiple accidents were reported on several highways Sunday.

Denver officials said they were deploying 70 snowplows overnight to prepare for Monday's commute. At 3 a.m. MDT Monday, the weather service said it was still snowing around the city.

Julie Smith, a spokeswoman for Denver International Airport, said crews have treated runways in anticipation of dropping temperatures Sunday night.

"At this point we are seeing some delays with our airlines while they are getting their deicing operations up and running, and we do expect the airlines to be fully deicing in the morning," she said.

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<http://www.kttn.com/kgozfm/modules/news/article.php?storyid=112357>

Southwest of Denver, a seven-car pileup Sunday evening injured a sheriff's deputy and three civilians on U.S. 285 near the community of Doubleheader, The Denver Post reported. Weather was likely a factor in the crash, but its cause was still being investigated, sheriff's spokeswoman Jacki Kelley told the newspaper.

"The roads are just really bad out there," she said.

In another Highway 285 crash, the State Patrol said a Jefferson County Sheriff's deputy who was helping a motorist that slid off the roadway was taken to a hospital with undetermined injuries after the deputy's parked car was stuck by an SUV. Two people in the SUV were also hospitalized as a precaution.

Snow amounts could vary greatly as temperatures continue to drop later Sunday. But up to 15 inches could fall at higher elevations and 4 to 9 inches could fall at lower elevations, including Denver and other cities along Colorado's Front Range.

"May snow certainly isn't unheard of here in Colorado, even down in the Denver metro area," said David Barjenbruch, another weather service meteorologist in Boulder. "If we see the total accumulations that we are anticipating from this storm, we are certainly going to see a top 10 May snow event for the Denver metro area."

In southern Wyoming, the storm forced transportation officials to close a 150-mile stretch of Interstate 80 from Cheyenne to Rawlins on Sunday.

The weather service said mountainous areas in south-central Wyoming got up to 2 feet of snow, and the metro areas of Cheyenne and Laramie averaged 6 to 10 inches. Rob Cox, a weather service meteorologist in Cheyenne, said he expects more accumulation overnight, likely an additional 2 to 4 inches in some locations.

"There will be a lot of water after all this is said and done," he said, adding that there could be some localized flooding.

In the West, high winds at the bottom of the storm sent dust blowing across Arizona and New Mexico, and the Los Angeles area had been under "red flag" fire warnings, with authorities saying blazes could quickly spread out of control under low humidity, gusty winds and dry conditions.

The storm is the result of a low-pressure system moving east colliding with a cold air mass from the north. Spring-like weather was expected to return to the Rockies by Tuesday.