

## **WORST SNOW STORMS IN THE STATE OF WISCONSIN**

### **From 1881 to Present**

(Excluding lake-effect snow storms)

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- 1) **March 2-4, 1881** - Southern / Central - Blizzard - 2 to 4 feet of snow. Drifts to 20 feet. Milwaukee reported 28.5 inches. Between February 24 and March 20, 1881, Milwaukee received 63.7 inches of snow!
- 2) **January 15, 1887** - Southern / Central - Snowstorm - 2 feet of snow. Huge drifts.
- 3) **December 27-28, 1904** - Southern / Central - Heavy snow / ice. 26 inches of snow at Neillsville (Clark County) - still stands as the 24-hour state record.
- 4) **January 30-February 1, 1915** - Southern / Central - Heavy snow / ice - severe glazing. 10 inches of snow in Milwaukee.
- 5) **February 12-14, 1923** - Statewide - Blizzard - Heavy snow - severe drifting.
- 6) **February 4-5, 1924** - Southern - Blizzard - 20.3 inches at Milwaukee / 10 foot drifts. Still ranks as Milwaukee's heaviest snowfall in 24 hours.
- 7) **February 8-10, 1936** - Statewide - Blizzard - severe drifting.
- 8) **November 6-8, 1943** - Statewide - Heavy snow / ice - 10 to 18 inches of snow. Roads blocked for several days.
- 9) **January 28-30, 1947** - Southern / Central - Blizzard - 10 to 27 inches. Drifts to 15 feet. Roads blocked.
- 10) **April 8-9, 1973** - South half - Severe late season snowstorm - 10 to 20 inches. Madison had nearly 13 inches while Milwaukee measured a foot of heavy wet snow. Wind gusts above 50 mph. Many roads, including the interstates, were closed for two days.
- 11) **November 9-10, 1975** - Northern - Major snowstorm - 10 to 14 inches. 14 inches at Mellen in Ashland county. (Edmund Fitzgerald sinks in Lake Superior (Nov. 10).
- 12) **March 4-5, 1976** - South / East - devastating ice storm - One of the worst natural disasters to hit Wisconsin in history. This incredible ice storm completely snapped hundreds of utility poles, downed thousands of power and telephone lines and totally destroyed many trees. Some ice accumulations ranged up to a phenomenal five inches in diameter on wires and limbs of trees. The excessive ice accumulations were in part caused by thunderstorms that rapidly built up the ice. High winds gusting to 60 mph made a horrible situation even worse. Up to

600,000 residences were directly affected by the ice storm and up to 100,000 people were without power during the height of the storm. Some rural areas were without power for over 10 days. The following counties were declared federal disaster areas due to the ice storm: Calumet, Columbia, Crawford, Dane, Dodge, Fond du Lac, Grant, Green, Iowa, Jefferson, Lafayette, Manitowoc, Ozaukee, Richland, Rock, Sauk, Sheboygan, Vernon, Walworth, Washington and Waukesha.

13) **January 12-14, 1979** - Southeast - Near blizzard - 12 to 20 inches. Milwaukee had 14 inches. Drifts to 8 feet.

14) **January 3-4, 1982** - Southeast half - Blizzard - 8 to 16 inches. Northwest suburbs of Milwaukee had 16 inches. Madison reported 8 inches.

15) **January 22-23, 1982** - North half - Blizzard - 10 to 20 inches. Superior had 19 inches.

16) **November 30 - December 2, 1985** - Statewide (except southeast corner) - Widespread snows of 10 to 18 inches. Madison had about 10 inches.

17) **December 14-15, 1987** - South half - Blizzard (gusts to 73 mph) - 10 to 17 inches of snow. Madison and Milwaukee had 13 inches.

18) **December 2-3, 1990** - South half - Blizzard - Widespread 10 to 22 inches. Madison had 17.3 inches. Ranks as Madison's heaviest snowfall in 24 hours.

19) **October 31 - November 2, 1991** - Northwest / West Central - Blizzard - "Halloween Storm" - 15 to 30 inches, 6 to 10 foot drifts. 30 inches in Burnett, Douglas, Polk and St. Croix counties.

20) **November 26-27, 1995** - South half - Snowstorm - 7 to 14 inches. Snow fall rates of 2 to 3 inches per hour fell during the afternoon commute and resulted in a traffic "gridlock" around the Milwaukee area. Commute times surpassed 2 to 3 hours, where normally it would take 30 minutes. The highest snowfall total was 14 inches at Two Rivers.

21) **January 26-27, 1996** - Statewide - Heavy snow - 6 to 18 inches. Localized amounts of 16 to 18 inches fell along a line from La Crosse to Green Bay.

22) **March 13-14, 1997** - West Central / Northeast - Snowstorm - 12 to 28 inches. 28 inches at Wautoma in Waushara county.

23) **March 8-9, 1998** - Southwest / Central - Blizzard - 8 to 12 inches. Wind gusts reached 40 to 60 mph at times, causing frequent whiteout conditions. The heaviest snow total was 11.7 inches at Muscoda.

- 24) **January 2-3, 1999** - Southeast half - Blizzard - Widespread 6 to 20 inches. Wind gusts of 30 to 35 mph, with gusts of 50 to 60 mph near the lake created frequent whiteout conditions. Snow drifts of 5 to 10 feet were common. The heaviest snowfall total was in Slinger with 20.5 inches.
- 25) **November 26-27, 2001** - Northwest - Snowstorm - 12 to 20 inches. The heaviest axis of snow occurred along a Siren to Ashland line. The heaviest total was 20.0 inches in southeast Bayfield County.
- 26) **March 14-15, 2002** - Northwest - Snowstorm - 8 to 20 inches. The heaviest axis of snow occurred across southern Bayfield, Ashland, and northern Iron -- ironically the same axis as the November 23-27, 2001 storm.
- 27) **January 21-22, 2005** - Statewide - Blizzard (gusts to 50 mph) - 6 to 15 inches. Although winds gusted up to 50 mph in some areas and visibilities were reduced to less than 1/4 mile due to falling or blowing snow, many areas didn't experience these conditions for 3 hours or more to classify as a full blizzard. Nonetheless, heavy snow and very windy conditions created near white-out conditions especially in the south and east. The heaviest totals occurred near Lake Michigan due to additional lake effect, where some areas ended up near 15 inches.
- 28) **March 18-19, 2005** – West-central – Winter Storm – 18 to 23 inches in a swath from southern Buffalo County to western Jackson County, with 12 to 15.6 inches in La Crosse County. The maximum of 23 inches occurred in northwestern Jackson County.
- 29) **March 13-14, 2006** – West-central to Northcentral – Winter Storm – 17 to 32 inch swath from St. Croix County northeast to Iron County. Thundersnow enhanced the accumulations. In Iron County, Gile measured 32 inches while Upton had 27 inches. In Ashland County, Mellen gathered 27 inches. Very poor visibility resulted from gusty winds around 30 mph, and drifting resulted in hundreds of accidents. Locals said it was the worst storm since the 1980s.
- 30) **February 23-26, 2007** – West-central through southern and eastern Wisconsin – Two-round storm, with one overnight the 23<sup>rd</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup>, and the second round overnight the 24<sup>th</sup> into the 25<sup>th</sup>. Leftover snow accumulations continued overnight the 25<sup>th</sup> into the 26<sup>th</sup>. In counties surrounding La Crosse, 8 to 15.6 inches (Galesville) fell in round one, while round two produced 6 to 12.5 inches (Sullivan NWS office) over the southern three-fourths of the state. The leftover snow added another 1 to 4 inches, except for 6 to 14 inches from New London into Door County. Many locations totaled 20 to 25 inches for this long-duration two-punch episode from around La Crosse to Port Washington, and a small part of Door County. Gusty winds generated snow drifts up to 5 to 7 feet in height.