



# THE SENTINEL

Reporting on Preparedness



Public Health

District 2 Public Health (North) • Emergency Preparedness • Gainesville, Georgia

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## December snow blankets Atlanta, north Georgia

On Friday, December 8, 2017 a slow moving snow storm moved into Georgia and dumped unusually heavy amounts of snow for this time of year. While the storm broke no records, it did leave an estimated 12 inches of snow in higher mountain elevations and approximately 6 inches in areas around Atlanta and the foothills north of I-85.

After above normal temperatures had dominated the region for weeks, a blast of cold air moved in from the north and met with precipitation driven up from the gulf. As the storm crossed into Georgia from Alabama, it developed into a stronger front. This resulted in greater accumulations of snow than previously forecasted. Local responders

prepared for the storm. Georgia Department of Transportation prepared to spread brine on the major roadways and readied equipment to scrape snow from the roads. School systems reviewed weather information and made decisions on whether to close or open. Utility companies, still trying to recover from the effects of Hurricane Irma, anticipated a new round of power outages. EMA Directors opened Emergency Operations Centers and monitored the National Weather Service (NWS) for updates.

By late Friday afternoon, the NWS confirmed that conditions for the storm had changed significantly and concluded that more snow than previously forecasted might fall. For Georgia, this event was unusual because significant amounts of snow are typically seen in January, February, and March. However, for those who have lived in Georgia for a length of time understand that weather here can change rapidly and sometimes violently. In the last twelve months, counties in District 2 have dealt with wildfires, tornadoes, hurricanes and snow storms.

Recent historic snow storms in Georgia include the Macon/Columbus snow of 1973 which heaped sixteen plus inches of snow in middle Georgia. The National Guard was deployed to help stranded motorists. The "Blizzard of 1993," which piled a foot-and-a-half of snow in northwest Georgia caused roofs to collapse and other damage.

Since then, technology advancements in weather forecasting and monitoring have improved emergency managers' situational awareness. Meteorologists depend on better software and computer modeling, and devices like road sensors can alert of dangerous driving conditions on roads.

Preparedness is key to mitigating the effects of weather events. Because weather is so unpredictable, take time now to make a family emergency plan, an emergency kit, and get informed about threats in our area.

## Our Snow Edition: Middle Georgia's Icy Weekend

### Macon Telegraph and News

VOL. CXLVII, No. 42

MACON, GEORGIA, SUNDAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 11, 1973, HOME EDITION

100 PAGES — 5 SECTIONS — 30¢

## Macon Struggles To Regain Footing After Record-Setting 16-Inch Snow

By GRANT JACKSON

Macons first snow.  
A blizzard winter storm that dumped a record 16 inches of snow on Macon Friday and Saturday more than doubled the old record of 6.5 inches set Feb. 20, 1964.

The snow and some ice swept across a 50-mile path from the Atlanta border city South Carolina, briefly piling up to 16 inches in Macon, 20 miles above the Florida line.

The heaviest snow fell in a belt about 10 miles either side of a line through Columbus.

Up, Up, Up  
Here is how Macon's record snowfall piled up:  
1 p.m., Friday 1 inches  
2 p.m., Friday 4 inches  
Midnight 8 inches  
1 a.m., Saturday 12 inches  
2 a.m., Saturday 16 inches



By JOHN TURNER and PHIL ROSSIGNOL

Macons, with aid from across the state, began Saturday digging out of a record snowfall that paralyzed transportation and left many without power by night and later homes.

A task force of 100 government, business, law enforcement and medical workers these efforts on providing food, shelter and medical supplies for those in need and for the 10,000 of motorists stranded in the area.

Chief Police Officer and Chief of Police in both Macon and Columbus were alerted to report to the fact that some snow melted Saturday afternoon.

Chief Police Officer Wayne "Mac" Turner said that about 10,000 motorists were stranded in the area Sunday.

Wayne Turner Thompson, in an effort to keep motorists off the roads, ordered the roads

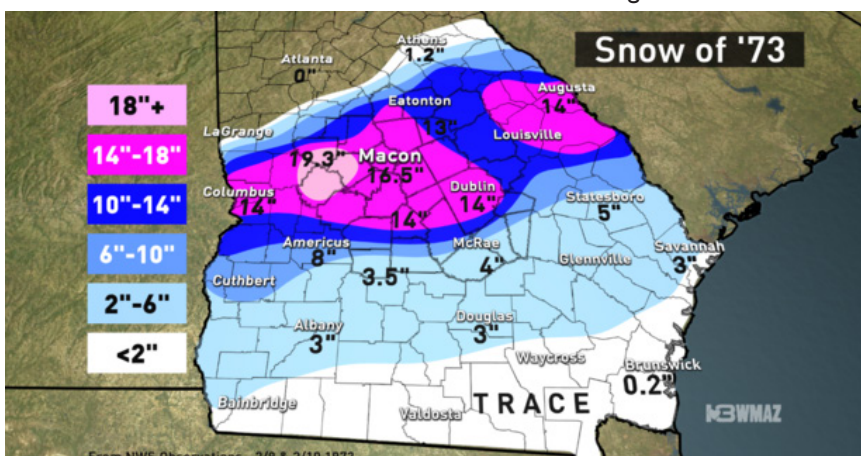
More Storm Coverage  
Pages 2, 3, 5, 7, 12, 13, and 14A  
As Well As 10B

Local Quarantine in military vehicles in a series of convoys all morning (11) to remove the city carrying military vehicles of medicine and food to stragglers.

State Troopers sent out (see STORM, Page 1B)

Stranded

The Snow of 1973 remains one of the most unusual Georgia storms.





## December snow blankets Atlanta, most of north Georgia



Above left: This photo was taken about two hours after the start of the snow and shows early accumulation in Habersham County. The school system cancelled classes the day before. It proved to be a good decision as some roads were beginning to get slushy and a little slippery.

Above right: Snow was covering the road on Alt. Hwy 17 near Currahee Mountain at the Habersham and Stephens County line around 1:30 pm on Friday. This made for an interesting commute home as some areas were experiencing blizzard-like conditions. Snow would continue during the night and into Saturday morning in some mountain counties, where estimates of more than a foot of snow were reported. Lower lying counties reported rain, flurries, or several inches of snow.

At left: Heavy snow continued into the evening. This photo, taken around 9:30 p.m. shows about three inches of accumulation with more on the way. This little cedar that sprouted a few years ago looks right at home in the snow.

## January storm brings freezing temps, snow and ice to South Georgia

Freezing temperatures invaded Georgia in January and mixed with moisture from a cyclone disturbance in the Atlantic Ocean. As the two fronts met, this caused snow and ice to fall from Valdosta to Savannah and along the eastern Atlantic Coast. Bridges and overpasses were closed in Savannah as the frozen precipitation made them impassable. Roads quickly became slippery and resulted in numerous accidents which kept public safety very busy.

Weather experts cautioned residents to take precautions against the cold and public safety officials urged residents to stay off the roads. Power companies began to report outages soon after the accumulating snow and ice caused trees and limbs to fall across power lines.

Meanwhile, counties in District 2 experienced temperatures in the single digits to the teens, but were spared precipitation in this round of winter weather. Still, everyone needs to be vigilant as winter has just begun.







## Mary Beth Rylee receives Leroy Sims Award for exemplary work

The Georgia Coroner's Association held their annual conference in Macon in September 2017. During the conference, Banks County Deputy Coroner Mary Beth Rylee was presented the Leroy Sims Award. Each year the Georgia Coroner's Association's president chooses a recipient that has gone above and beyond in their coroner's duties. This year, Deputy Coroner Rylee was selected for this prestigious award based on her work on a case in early 2017. This case involved a homeless veteran that had no known family or relatives. Deputy Rylee went the extra mile to make sure this veteran was given a place of rest at the Veteran's Cemetery in Canton, GA. "Deputy Coroner Rylee truly went above and beyond her duties to make sure this veteran was given an honorable funeral service and a proper burial," stated Banks County Coroner, Mark Savage.



Mary Beth Rylee (center) was awarded the Leroy Sims Award at the 2017 Georgia Coroner's Association Annual Conference. Pictured with her are: Mark Savage, Banks County Coroner (right) and Chris Stephens, Stephens County Coroner (left).

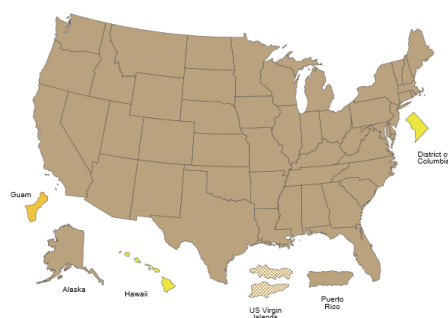
## Influenza activity starts early in Georgia and remains elevated

Influenza activity in Georgia quickly eclipsed the 1.9% baseline during October (week 41) and reached widespread activity in the state during early December. By January widespread activity was seen in all mainland states. Each year the question is, "will this be a bad flu season?" And each year the answer is, "we will have to wait and see". Health officials became concerned earlier this year after reviewing results from the the southern hemisphere, whose flu season immediately precedes that of the United States. The heightened activity of H3N2 type A influenza in the southern hemisphere, had officials worried that the U.S. could experience a similar scenario here.

Thus far, H3N2 influenza activity in the U.S. has confirmed those concerns. In early January, CDC confirmed widespread activity of the H3N2 virus in all 49 mainland states for the first time in over a decade. Public health experts recommend getting the flu shot to fight against this virus. Health officials agree that the flu shot can help prevent the flu, or at least, lower the severity of the symptoms of flu if a person gets infected with the virus.

According to CDC, this particular strain of H3N2 flu virus has experienced a slight 'antigenic drift' (change). Because viruses are susceptible to constant change (drifts and/or shifts) the flu shot that is made for a particular virus may offer less protection if the virus experiences a change. Fortunately, the body's immune system often recognizes small differences in a virus and may respond to it, even if the vaccine composition is slightly different than the virus for which it was made.

Another reason to get a flu shot is the vaccine is made to protect against other influenza viruses. Depending on the type of flu shot, it can guard against two strains of A and two strains of B (quadrivalent), or two strains of A and one B (trivalent). More information from the CDC about flu can be found at, <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/viruses/change.htm>



Influenza Activity Estimates



\*This map indicates geographic spread and does not measure the severity of influenza activity.



## 2017 record year for disasters in south, nationally costing billions

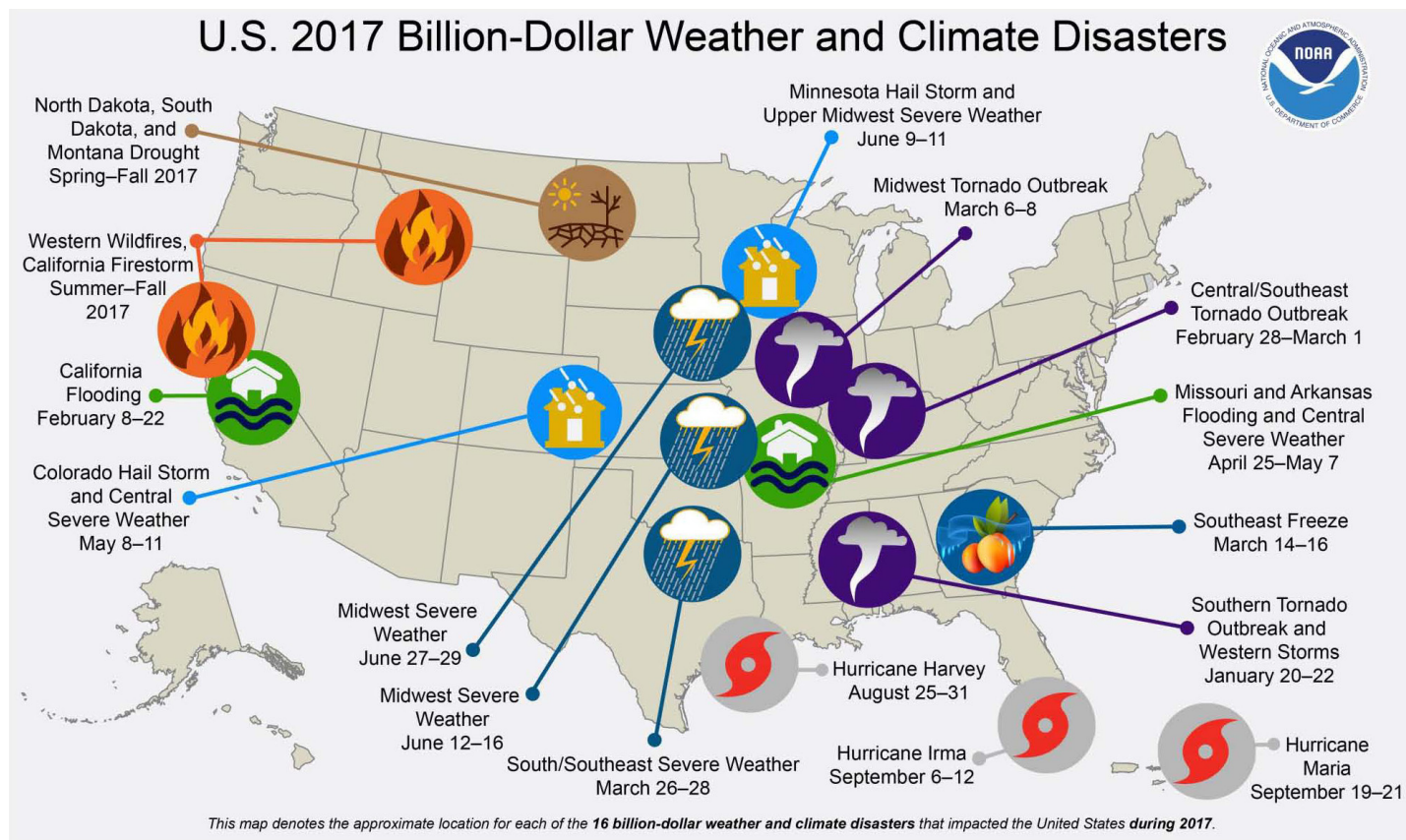
During 2017, the United States saw disaster record after record broken. Unfortunately, this was not a good trend for record setting with 15 disasters costing more than one billion dollars each to nearly \$100 billion each.

Southern tornado outbreaks in January started the year and were closely followed by flooding in California. The spring brought more tornadoes for the South and Midwest. Across the plains from Montana to South Dakota drought stymied wheat production which burdened cattle ranchers. Western wildfires destroyed 9.8 million acres in numerous western states and California making it the most expensive wildfire event in history. Colder temperatures in the South caused a deep freeze that wiped out fruit crops.

The summer months offered no relief as the Mid-

west experienced tornado outbreaks and flooding. Severe weather from Colorado to Minnesota brought damaging hail. To top off the year, three major hurricanes ripped across the Atlantic destroying U.S. territories and islands in their paths before making landfall on the mainland. Coastal Georgia was impacted as hospitals, long-term care facilities and residents had to evacuate. Hurricane Irma prompted Governor Deal to issue a state of emergency for all 159 Georgia counties.

In Georgia, 2017 followed a year that was filled with much of the same - winter weather, tornadoes and hurricanes. However, in 2016 north Georgia also had to deal with the wildfires in several counties along the North Carolina and Tennessee borders.



## THE SENTINEL

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