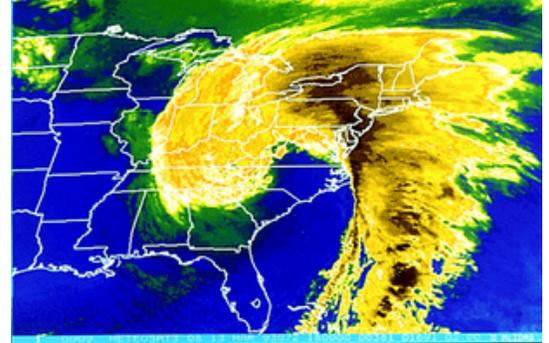


The 1993 Storm of the Century

By Joyce Furstenau

The Storm of the Century was called by many names. Among them were "The '93 Superstorm," "The White Hurricane," and "The Blizzard of '93." All names were well earned. The storm was called a freak of nature. It began in February of 1993 when the Jet Stream blasted cold air into Montana and on down to the Gulf of Mexico. It took a u-turn and banked back up the East Coast.

On Friday, March 13, 1993, a group of powerful thunderstorms formed over the Gulf of Mexico. These storms merged with a cold front pushing east from the West Coast. These two storm systems collided with the Jet Stream over the Gulf. This collision created a storm surge. "It looked like a big washing machine. There were huge waves and spray and hail," remarked one Coast Guard officer. The winds hit 50 mph and the water swells were up to 30 feet. The freighter *Fantastico* sunk. Seven crew members of the freighter died when the Coast Guard rescue helicopters ran low on fuel and had to return to base.



Temperatures over the eastern U.S. began to fall to near or below freezing. The storm blew ashore. Eleven different tornadoes formed over Florida killing seven people. Then the snow began falling. Several inches of snow fell on Florida's panhandle. All told, forty-four Florida residents lost their lives, and the storm had just begun.

The storm continued its path through Alabama. It dropped 12-18 inches of snow there. In Birmingham, the temperature dropped to 2 degrees F. As the snow fell, interstate highways were clogged with jack-knifed semi-trucks and fatal accidents. Hundreds were rescued along the Appalachian Trail. There was an eighty-mile delay on I-75 from Atlanta to Tennessee. A total of fifty-six inches of snow fell in Mount Le Conte, Tennessee. In Latrobe, Pennsylvania, snow drifted ten feet high. The storm shut down every major airport along the East Coast. As the storm hit, many of these towns lost power as well. The temperature ranged from -12 degrees in Burlington, Vermont to 31 degrees in Daytona Beach, Florida.

By 7 P.M. that day, twelve inches of snow had fallen in New York City. The state received a total of thirty-six inches in twenty-four hours. Twenty-three people died in traffic accidents related to the storm in New York. The storm surge washed eighteen vacation homes in Long Island into the sea, then continued its push northward.

On Sunday March 14, another freighter was caught in the whirling ocean south of Nova Scotia. The captain of the *Gold Bond Conveyor* freighter reported 100-foot waves and 90 mph winds. The ship was beginning to sink. A turbo-prop patrol plane was sent to keep watch. Suddenly, a huge swell swallowed up the *Conveyor*. The entire crew of thirty-two people died in the frigid waters.

The Superstorm of 1993 caused up to \$6 billion in damage to cars, homes, and property. It affected at least twenty-six U.S. states. It left over three million people without power. It killed a total of 270 people. Forty-eight were reported missing at sea.

This storm marked a milestone in U.S. Weather Bureau history. It was the first time the Weather Bureau was able to accurately predict a storm system's severity several days in advance. It was the first time in history that governors of many states declared a "state of emergency" before the storm made its way to their own state. Due to the advancements made in weather forecasting in the past decades, the National Weather Service was able to increase its snowfall-prediction accuracy rate to 75 percent.

Name _____



Date _____

The 1993 Storm of the Century

Questions

_____ 1. In what year did the Storm of the Century take place?

- A. 2008
- B. 1983
- C. 2003
- D. 1993

_____ 2. How many tornadoes hit Florida?

- A. ten
- B. eleven
- C. twelve
- D. nine

3. How high were snow drifts in Latrobe, Pennsylvania?

4. Which interstate highway had an eighty-mile delay?

_____ 5. How much snow fell in New York?

- A. 36 inches
- B. 12 inches
- C. 45 inches
- D. 24 inches

_____ 6. How many people died as a result of the Superstorm of '93?

- A. 27
- B. 57
- C. 217
- D. 270

