

From: **Rachel Evans** <rachel02144@yahoo.com>

Date: Thu, Mar 22, 2018 at 4:25 AM

Subject: How does the SPS make its weather decisions?

To: Paula O'Sullivan <osullivan.pg@gmail.com>, Lance Davis <lancedavis@gmail.com>

Cc: Laura Pitone <colepitone@comcast.net>, Carrie Normand <cnormand@rcn.com>, Jason Evans <jwe02144@yahoo.com>

Dear Paula & Lance,

The role of the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) is to prepare and respond to emergencies. Every city and town has an Emergency Management Director. For Somerville, that EMD is listed as Deputy Chief Charles Breen, of the Fire Department. When there is the potential for severe weather, MEMA rates the risk to public health and safety and sends "Situational Awareness" statements to public officials, on a regular schedule after 10 am morning and 4 pm afternoon briefings. The responsibility of the EMD, is to convey that information to city officials. Most of this information is also available to the general public, through any of the links below.

Below is the statement issued by MEMA on Wednesday, March 21, 2018 at 4:11:32 PM, following its afternoon briefing. This statement indicates that the Winter Storm Warning that had been issued on Wednesday morning, had been downgraded to a Winter Weather Advisory for Southeastern Middlesex County, ending at 8 am. The link to the National Weather Service, provides specific forecasts by zip code, which was 3-8 inches at 4 pm and 3-5 inches of snow for Somerville, as of 6:30 pm. This forecast was downgraded again at 10:05 pm to a Hazardous Weather Outlook and Wind Advisory, with a forecast of less than 1 inch of snow for Somerville.

At 7:30 pm on Wednesday, March 21, 2018, the Somerville Public Schools issued a statement cancelling school because **"The most recent weather predictions are still calling for up to 8-10 inches of wet and heavy snow starting tonight and lasting through tomorrow mid-morning**, which would make for dangerous roads, sidewalks, and travel conditions tomorrow."

It appears that the Somerville Public Schools is making its decisions about school cancellations, without relying upon the timely, official information that is provided to city officials. While this was clearly a changeable forecast, both MEMA and the NWS downgraded the storm over three hours before this cancellation. The SPS statement itself appears to be relying upon a "weather prediction" from somewhere other than the official source for Massachusetts cities and towns.

Can you please investigate how the Somerville EMD, or other city officials, convey MEMA storm warnings to the SPS? How and when does the SPS administration make a determination to cancel school? Finally, as many other parents are asking, how does the SPS decision-making interact with the City's determination to declare a snow emergency?

Thank you for your service to our community!

Rachel Evans

From: Packard, Christine (CDA) <Christine.Packard@MassMail.State.MA.US>

Sent: Wednesday, March 21, 2018 4:11:32 PM

To:

Subject: Situational Awareness Statement #6: Nor'easter Today into Thursday

MASSACHUSETTS EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY
SITUATIONAL AWARENESS STATEMENT

DATE: March 21, 2018

TIME: 4 PM

SUBJECT: Nor'easter Today into early Thursday

SITUATION:

The National Weather Service (NWS) is forecasting heavy snow, high winds, and minor to moderate coastal flooding today into Thursday, with heaviest precipitation in southeastern MA. Precipitation has begun over the Cape, and will slowly extend north and west, reaching Boston by 5 p.m. and northern MA/New Hampshire boarder by 10 PM. Accumulating snow will begin between 7 – 8 p.m. this evening, and last through 2 – 5 a.m. Thursday morning. Snow will then taper, and eventually end by mid-day Thursday, pulling out of Massachusetts from the southwest to the northeast. There is still some uncertainty in snowfall totals, especially north of the Mass Pike as marginal temperatures and dry air intruding into the region may lower snowfall amounts.

FORECAST:

Snow:

• 1-4 inches for western MA; 3-6 inches for central and northeastern MA; and 4-8 inches for Boston into southeastern MA (slightly higher amounts are possible in pockets of eastern MA and south of the Mass Pike). Precipitation types look to vary with a rain/snow mix across the Cape, with snow fall amounts of 1-2 inches.

- Snowfall rates of 1 inch per hour are possible, especially during the overnight hours.
- Heaviest snowfall leading to any travel impacts will be between 6pm and 2 AM Thursday morning.
- Uncertainty remains for snowfall totals north of the Mass pike where dry air may reduce snowfall amounts. Greater confidence in totals south of the Mass pike.
- Snow consistency will be on the wetter side, especially in southeastern MA, so there is the potential for some isolated power outages, however it will probably not be to the extent that we have seen with our past storms.

- Cape Cod, Martha's Vineyard, and southeast Middlesex County have been downgraded to a Winter Weather Advisory.

Wind:

- Northeast to north winds may gust to 45-55 mph along the immediate MA coast, and 55-60 mph on the Cape and Islands. Winds may gust to 25-35 mph farther inland across the remainder of the region.
- Winds will peak between 8 p.m. and daybreak on Thursday.
- Strong wind gusts along the coast may cause scattered power outages, especially in eastern MA and the Cape/Islands.

Coastal Flooding:

- Minor with pockets of moderate coastal flooding is likely during early Thursday AM high tide along the southeast MA coast.
- Overall expect widespread minor coastal flooding for the early Thursday morning high tide.
- The Coastal Flood Watch for the coastline south of Boston has been downgraded to a Coastal Flood Advisory.

Marine:

Dangerous marine conditions with storm-force winds and rough seas are expected.

Power Outages:

There is a potential for scattered power outages, especially in southeastern MA and coastal Plymouth county where 6-8 inches of heavy wet snow is expected, and winds will be strong.

WATCHES, WARNINGS AND ADVISORIES (as of 3:30 PM):





<u>Winter Storm Warning</u> <u>Issued: March 21 at 2:51PM EDT</u> <u>Expiring: March 22 at 8:00AM EDT</u> Areas affected: Eastern Norfolk; Eastern Plymouth; Northern Bristol; Southern Bristol; Southern Plymouth; Southern Worcester; Suffolk; Western Norfolk; Western Plymouth	Urgency: Expected Status: Actual
<u>Winter Weather Advisory</u> <u>Issued: March 21 at 2:51PM EDT</u> <u>Expiring: March 22 at 8:00AM EDT</u> Areas affected: Eastern Hampden; Western Hampden	Urgency: Expected Status: Actual
<u>Winter Weather Advisory</u> <u>Issued: March 21 at 2:51PM EDT</u> <u>Expiring: March 22 at 8:00AM EDT</u> Areas affected: Central Middlesex County; Eastern Essex; Northern Worcester; Northwest Middlesex County; Western Essex	Urgency: Expected Status: Actual

<u>Winter Weather Advisory</u> <u>Issued: March 21 at 2:51PM EDT</u> <u>Expiring: March 22 at 8:00AM EDT</u> Areas affected: Southeast Middlesex	Urgency: Expected Status: Actual
<u>Winter Weather Advisory</u> <u>Issued: March 21 at 2:51PM EDT</u> <u>Expiring: March 22 at 8:00AM EDT</u> Areas affected: Barnstable; Dukes	Urgency: Expected Status: Actual
<u>Coastal Flood Advisory</u> <u>Issued: March 21 at 2:38PM EDT</u> <u>Expiring: March 22 at 6:00AM EDT</u> Areas affected: Eastern Essex; Eastern Norfolk; Suffolk	Urgency: Expected Status: Actual
<u>Coastal Flood Advisory</u> <u>Issued: March 21 at 2:38PM EDT</u> <u>Expiring: March 22 at 6:00AM EDT</u> Areas affected: Barnstable; Dukes; Eastern Plymouth; Nantucket	Urgency: Expected Status: Actual
<u>Winter Weather Advisory</u> <u>Issued: March 21 at 12:40PM EDT</u> <u>Expiring: March 22 at 8:00AM EDT</u> Areas affected: Southern Berkshire	Urgency: Expected Status: Actual

NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE GRAPHICS



Main Points

Hazard	Impacts	Location	Timing
Moderate Snow; Possibly Heavy 	Hazardous travel conditions on all surfaces, treated or untreated, avoid travel if possible. Potential for scattered power outages.	Heavy snow south of the Masspike, with the axis of heaviest snowfall being across SE Mass and Rhode Island. Lower snowfall totals north of the Masspike.	Heaviest snow will be between 6pm-12am tonight. The evening commute will likely be impacted, especially south of the Pike.
Strong to Damaging Winds 	Loose objects will become airborne; scattered tree damage, isolated power outages, possible structure damage	Eastern MA coast and southern RI coast	Strongest tonight into Thursday morning.
Minor to Moderate Coastal Flooding 	Up to 2 feet of water on vulnerable shore roads	Eastern and Southeastern Massachusetts Coastline – east and north facing shorelines.	Early Thursday morning high tide, mainly between 1 AM and 6 AM.
Storm Force Winds & Large Waves 	Hazardous wind and sea conditions for experienced and properly equipped vessels	All of Southern New England Waters	Today into Thursday





NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE

NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION



Winter Weather Hazards



Winter Storm Warnings/Advisories Tonight – Thu Morning

Marine Headlines: Storm/Gale Warnings Today – Early Thu Morning

Wind Related Hazards



Wind Headlines: High Wind Warning & Adv Tonight – Early Thu

Flood Headlines: None

Marine / Coastal Hazards



Coastal Flood Adv & Watch: late Wed. night/early Thu.

Flood Related Hazards



Weather Forecast Office
Boston, MA



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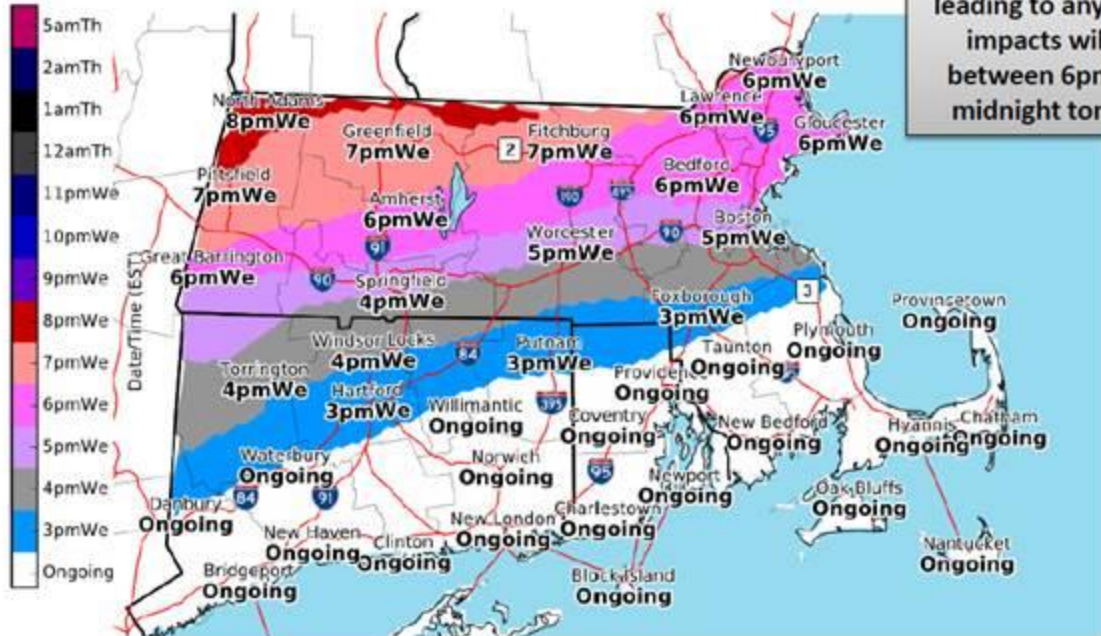
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Time of Arrival of Winter Weather Threats

Precipitation Onset Time Valid: Tonight into Thursday



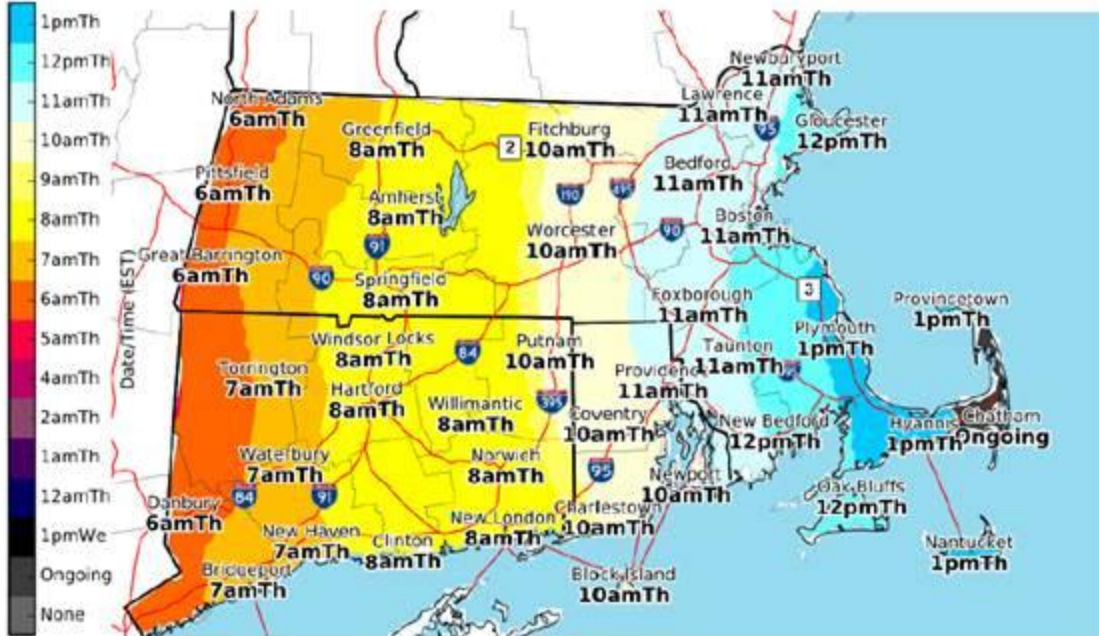
Heaviest snowfall leading to any travel impacts will be between 6pm and midnight tonight.





End Time of Winter Weather Threats

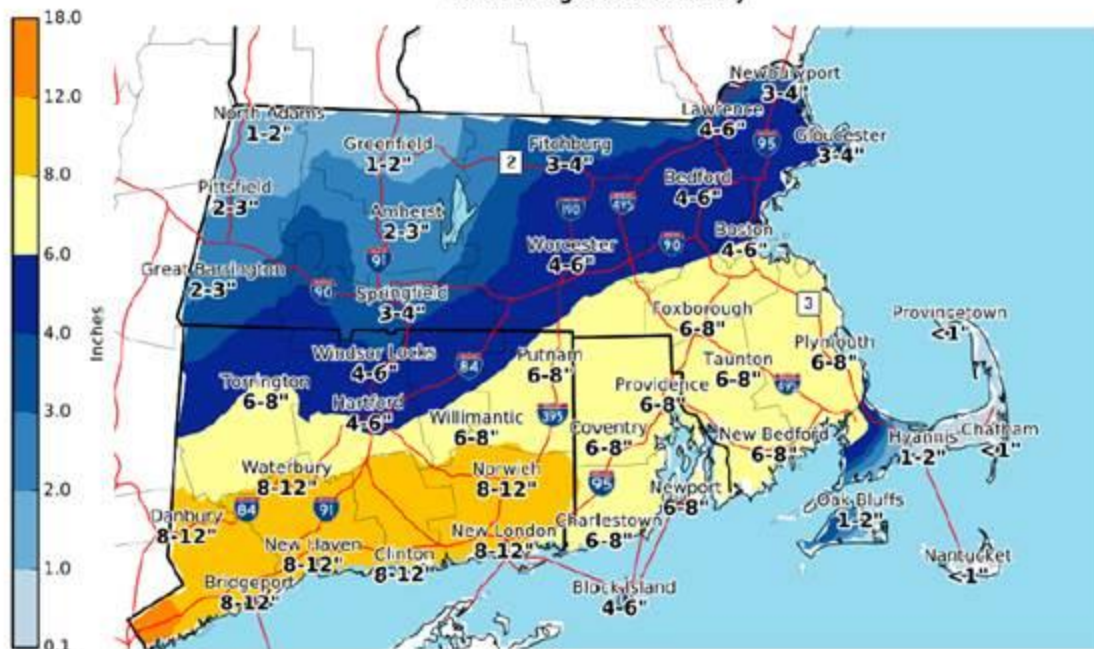
Precipitation Ending Time
Valid: Tonight into Thursday





Forecast Storm Total Snowfall

Expected Snowfall - Official NWS Forecast Valid: Tonight into Thursday



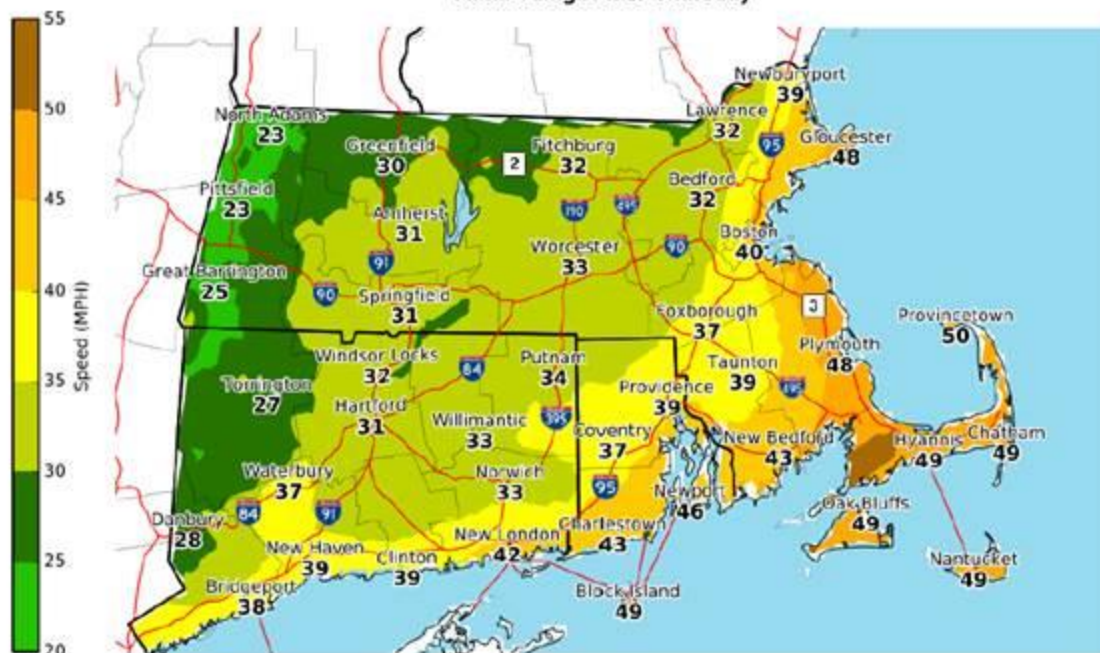


NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE
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Forecast Maximum Wind Gusts

Max Wind Gusts (MPH)
Valid: Tonight into Thursday



Weather Forecast Office
Boston, MA



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MEMA OPERATIONS

The State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) is at Level 1 (Steady State). MEMA will activate the State Emergency Operations Center at 6:00 a.m. Thursday with the following agencies/organizations:

- American Red Cross
- Department of Public Utilities
- Eversource
- National Grid
- MassDOT
- MEMA
- Department of Public Health

MEMA's Region 2 EOC will also activate at 6:00 a.m.

Local/Regional Operations

The BCREPC Multi-Agency Coordination Center (MACC) will be activated at 6 p.m. today for the overnight operational period.

No Regional Emergency Shelter System activation is planned at this time, but the Shelter System partners are on standby should the need arise.

Preparedness and Safety Information

- Safety and preparedness tips for nor'easters and coastal storms: <http://www.mass.gov/index.php/service-details/nor-easter-coastal-storm-safety-tips>
 - Winter storm preparedness and safety information: <http://www.mass.gov/index.php/service-details/winter-storm-safety-tips>
 - Safe winter driving tips: <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/safe-winter-driving-tips>
 - Winter safety tips for pets: <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/winter-pet-safety-tips>
 - Power outage preparedness and safety information: <http://www.mass.gov/index.php/service-details/power-outage-safety-tips>
- Stay Informed:

- Utilize *Massachusetts Alerts* to receive emergency notifications and information from the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency and the National Weather Service. *Massachusetts Alerts* is a free app that is available for Android and iPhones. To learn more about *Massachusetts Alerts*, and for information on how to download the free app onto your smartphone, visit: <http://www.mass.gov/service-details/massachusetts-alerts-smartphone-app>.

- Utilize MEMA's real-time power outage viewer to stay informed about current power outages in your community and region, and across the state, including information from utility companies about restoration times: <http://mema.mapsonline.net/public.html>

- Utilize MEMA's live weather radar and forecasting tools: <http://www.mass.gov/map-resources>

Online Resources:

For additional information and resources, visit:

Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency at www.mass.gov/mema

MEMA's Facebook page: <http://www.facebook.com/MassachusettsEMA>

MEMA Twitter: [@MassEMA](https://twitter.com/MassEMA)

Federal Emergency Management Agency at www.fema.gov

National Weather Service/Taunton at www.weather.gov/boston

- NWS office in Taunton is in the process of relocating to Norton, MA. They are running forecast operations from the National Weather Service in Gray, ME. The best way to contact this NWS office is via email or on NWSChat but if necessary, can be reached at [207-688-4253](tel:207-688-4253).

National Weather Service/Albany, NY at www.weather.gov/albany

National Weather Service Weather Prediction Center: <http://www.wpc.ncep.noaa.gov>

National Weather Service Storm Prediction Center: <http://www.spc.noaa.gov/>

Mass211 at www.mass211.org