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Past decade was snowiest 10-year stretch in Boston

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SUZANNE KREITER/GLOBE STAFF FILE

Snow-covered cars were seen in South Boston last February.

By **Matt Rocheau**

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The past decade was the snowiest 10-year stretch ever recorded in Boston.

A total of 533 inches of snow — or 53.3 inches per season on average — fell in Boston between the winter of 2005-2006 and the winter of 2014-2015, more than in any 10-year period since records began being kept in the late 1800s.

Last winter's record-setting snowfall certainly helped to boost those numbers, but the winters of 2004-2005 and 2010-2011 were also unusually snowy. The 10-year period that ended with the winter of 2013-2014 was the second-snowiest on record.

"So don't let anyone tell you 'Oh, it doesn't snow like when I was a kid!'" Joseph D'Aleo, chief forecaster for WeatherBELL Analytics, said during a recent presentation he gave at a weather forecasting conference, drawing laughter from the crowd.

Dan Leonard, senior meteorologist at Weather Services International in Andover, said that there is evidence that winters in our region over the past couple of decades have become more extreme, ranging from unusually cold and snowy to unseasonably mild and dry.

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"In the past five years, we've had two of our worst winters ever as well as one of the mildest ever," he wrote in an e-mail.

Leonard said he was not sure what has caused the more extreme winters, but he did not rule out climate change as a potential explanation.

"A warmer global climate does not necessarily mean that New England's weather will get progressively warmer year after year," he wrote. "A very simple way to look at it — warmer air globally means more energy in the atmosphere which means propensity for stronger jet streams. Stronger jet [streams] yield more amplified patterns — bigger ridges, deeper troughs. The warm periods are warmer, the cold periods colder."

D'Aleo said in a follow-up interview that historical records of the 10-year rolling average of snowfall for Boston suggest that, at some point, the current trend will reverse — because it has in the past.

"We go through snowy periods. The 60's were notably snowy," he said. Eventually, he expects, "We'll get some leaner years."

"That's the way weather is and the way climate is," D'Aleo said of the fluctuation.

Paul Pastelok, senior meteorologist and lead long-range forecaster at AccuWeather.com, said it's possible that the recent snowy cycle could be broken this year, noting how long-term forecast models suggest our region will see a stormy, but mild upcoming winter that should limit snow totals.

Still, "snowfall is so tough to predict," especially for coastal cities like Boston. "A lot of it has to do with timing — systems coming in when the water is cold and there's cold air mass."

And during the past 10 winters, Boston has often been in a sweet spot for snow.

"I think we've just been in a cycle where things have worked out perfectly," said Pastelok.

10-year rolling average of snowfall in Boston

Created with Highcharts 4.0.3 1899-1900 1900-1901 1901-1902 1902-1903 1903-1904 1904-1905 1905-1906 1906-1907 1907-1908 1908-1909 1909-1910 1910-1911 1911-1912 1912-1913 1913-1914 1914-1915 1915-1916 1916-1917 1917-1918 1918-1919 1919-1920 1920-1921 1921-1922 1922-1923 1923-1924 1924-1925 1925-1926 1926-1927 1927-1928 1928-1929 1929-1930 1930-1931 1931-1932 1932-1933 1933-1934 1934-1935 1935-1936 1936-1937 1937-1938 1938-1939 1939-1940 1940-1941 1941-1942 1942-1943 1943-1944 1944-1945 1945-1946 1946-1947 1947-1948 1948-1949 1949-1950 1950-1951 1951-1952 1952-1953 1953-1954 1954-1955 1955-1956 1956-1957 1957-1958 1958-1959 1959-1960 1960-1961 1961-1962 1962-1963 1963-1964 1964-1965 1965-1966 1966-1967 1967-1968 1968-1969 1969-1970 1970-1971 1971-1972 1972-1973 1973-1974 1974-1975 1975-1976 1976-1977 1977-1978 1978-1979 1979-1980 1980-1981 1981-1982 1982-1983 1983-1984 1984-1985 1985-1986 1986-1987 1987-1988 1988-1989 1989-1990 1990-1991 1991-1992 1992-1993 1993-1994 1994-1995 1995-1996 1996-1997 1997-1998 1998-1999 1999-2000 2000-2001 2001-2002 2002-2003 2003-2004 2004-2005 2005-2006 2006-2007 2007-2008 2008-2009 2009-2010 2010-2011 2011-2012 2012-2013 2013-2014 2014-2015 2015-2016 2016-2017 2017-2018 2018-2019

DATA: National Weather Service

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