

This string of storms is unusual — and part of a trend of snowy weather



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You've got to have the right tools. Marc Philibert, of McCarthy Landscaping, walked to his pickup truck after buying snow shovels at a hardware store in North Andover.

By [Martin Finucane](#)

GLOBE STAFF MARCH 12, 2018

It's unusual for three nor'easters to pound the region in a month, and we haven't seen a similar parade of storms since that terrible winter of 2014-2015, when four nor'easters hit in about five weeks, a weather forecaster said.

“We’re in a snowy mode,” said Joe D’Aleo, chief meteorologist at private forecasting company WeatherBell Analytics in Lexington. “You can get into these modes and get them one after another.”

D’Aleo said that the Northeast has seen 25 of what the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration has defined as high-impact snowstorms in the past decade. No other decade has had more than 10 since such records began being kept more than 60 years ago, he said.

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D’Aleo said the coming storm, which is expected to dump from 12 to 20 inches of snow in a large swath of Massachusetts beginning Monday night amid blizzard conditions, is a “rather classic nor’easter,” a low-pressure system moving up the East Coast.

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Kim Buttrick, a meteorologist at the National Weather Service, said, “It happens a lot through the year. It’s your typical nor’easter. It has all the ingredients: snow, strong northeasterly winds, coastal flooding, and building seas offshore.”

Tom Kines, a meteorologist at Accuweather.com, said that in the month of March, warmer air moves across the southern tier of US states.

“At the same time, we still have these colder air masses lingering up in Canada that come down,” he said. When the two collide, “more times than not there’s going to be a big storm.”

The storms move east from the northern Great Plains and they intensify very quickly when they hit the coast of the mid-Atlantic or the Carolinas, Kines said.

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Steered by the jet stream, which follows a sort of sine-wave pattern across the United States, they then take a dramatic turn to the north and northeast and “provide New England with good dump of snow,” he said.

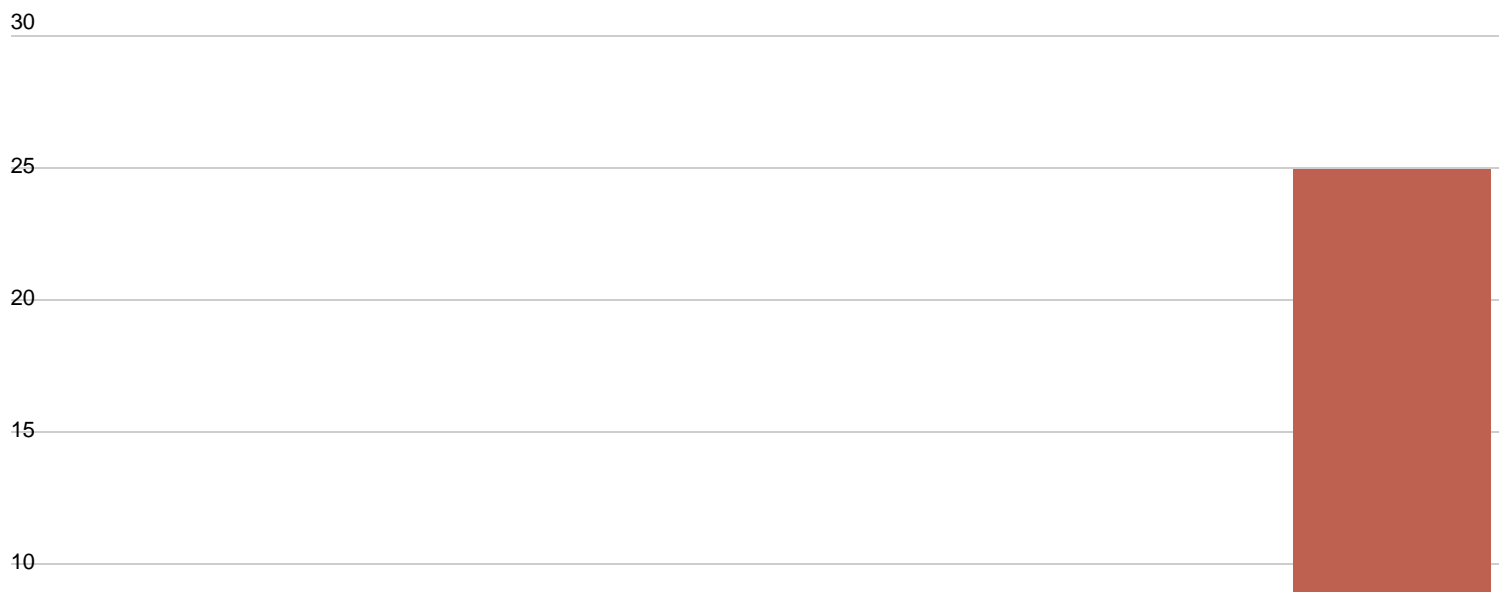
Buttrick said the current storm, like the two previous ones, is expected to linger longer than usual. The reason is a cutoff upper-level low-pressure area. Such lows dawdle rather than move to the east with the jet stream.

“We have a surface low, a coastal storm, off the Southeastern United States. It’s going to head northeast, traversing southeast of Nantucket, but there’s an upper-level low that has gotten cut off,” she said.

“The storm will head up towards Nova Scotia, but it’s not going to move out quickly. It means the main storm will be bringing us snow tonight and tomorrow, but we’re going to have continued scattered show showers and perhaps snow squalls into Wednesday,” she said.

High-impact storms that affected the Northeast corridor, by decade

The Northeast Snowfall Impact Scale, developed by National Weather Service officials, characterizes high-impact snowstorms in the region. These storms have large areas of 10-inch snowfall accumulations and greater. The chart below shows the number of high-impact storms recorded in recent decades.





High-impact storms that affected the Northeast corridor

The Northeast Snowfall Impact Scale, developed by National Weather Service officials, characterizes and ranks high-impact snowstorms in the region. These storms have large areas of 10-inch snowfall accumulations and greater. The index gives each storm that fits its criteria a score to rank them. The scores are a function of the area affected by the snowstorm, the amount of snow, and the number of people living in the path of the storm. The index uses those scores to assign each storm to one of five categories: extreme, crippling, major, significant, and notable. For more information, [click here](#).

Rank	Start	End	Description	NESIS score
1	3/12/93	3/14/93	Extreme	13.2
2	1/6/96	1/8/96	Extreme	11.78
3	3/2/60	3/5/60	Crippling	8.77
4	1/22/16	1/24/16	Crippling	7.66
5	2/15/03	2/18/03	Crippling	7.5
6	2/2/61	2/5/61	Crippling	7.06
7	1/11/64	1/14/64	Crippling	6.91
8	1/21/05	1/24/05	Crippling	6.8
9	1/19/78	1/21/78	Crippling	6.53
10	12/25/69	12/28/69	Crippling	6.29
11	2/10/83	2/12/83	Crippling	6.25
12	2/14/58	2/17/58	Crippling	6.25
13	1/29/66	1/31/66	Major	5.93

14	2/5/78	2/7/78	Major	5.78
15	2/12/07	2/15/07	Major	5.63
16	2/23/10	2/28/10	Major	5.46
17	1/29/15	2/3/15	Major	5.42
18	1/21/87	1/23/87	Major	5.4
19	2/8/94	2/12/94	Major	5.39
20	1/9/11	1/13/11	Major	5.31
21	2/1/11	2/3/11	Major	5.3
22	2/11/14	2/14/14	Major	5.28
23	3/12/17	3/15/17	Major	5.03
24	12/24/10	12/28/10	Major	4.92
25	2/17/79	2/19/79	Major	4.77
26	2/18/72	2/20/72	Major	4.77
27	12/11/60	12/13/60	Major	4.53
28	2/4/10	2/7/10	Major	4.38
29	2/7/13	2/10/13	Major	4.35
30	2/22/69	2/28/69	Major	4.29
31	2/9/10	2/11/10	Major	4.1
32	2/12/06	2/13/06	Major	4.1
33	1/29/14	2/4/14	Major	4.08
34	1/18/61	1/21/61	Major	4.04
35	12/18/09	12/21/09	Significant	3.99
36	12/23/66	12/25/66	Significant	3.81
37	2/8/69	2/10/69	Significant	3.51
38	3/18/58	3/21/58	Significant	3.51
39	2/5/67	2/8/67	Significant	3.5
40	4/6/82	4/7/82	Significant	3.35

41	12/30/13	1/3/14	Significant	3.31
42	3/4/13	3/9/13	Significant	3.05
43	12/13/13	12/16/13	Significant	2.95
44	1/25/15	1/28/15	Significant	2.62
45	3/15/07	3/18/07	Significant	2.54
46	1/24/00	1/26/00	Significant	2.52
47	12/30/00	12/31/00	Notable	2.37
48	3/31/97	4/1/97	Notable	2.29
49	1/26/11	1/27/11	Notable	2.17
50	3/18/56	3/19/56	Notable	1.87
51	10/29/11	10/30/11	Notable	1.75
52	1/3/18	1/5/18	Notable	1.71
53	3/1/09	3/3/09	Notable	1.59
54	11/26/14	11/28/14	Notable	1.56
55	12/9/14	12/14/14	Notable	1.49
56	2/22/87	2/23/87	Notable	1.46
57	2/2/95	2/4/95	Notable	1.43
58	2/8/15	2/10/15	Notable	1.32
59	1/20/14	1/22/14	Notable	1.26
60	1/25/87	1/26/87	Notable	1.19

SOURCE: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

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