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April's freak snowstorm was worst for century

This April was the worst for snow for almost one hundred years, records have revealed.

Although snow itself is not uncommon in April the amount that fell this year was the greatest for almost a century.

The storms which hit the region on the 26th were the result of a deep depression coming to a halt over the East Midlands. This drew exceptionally cold Arctic air from the north which collided with a warm, moist air mass from the Atlantic and the result was a severe blizzard during which almost 11 inches of snow fell. Winds regularly gusted to gale force and temperatures hovered around freezing point for about 24 hours.

RECORD

The coldest of the weather came in short spells though a new record was set on April 26, with the coldest April day since records began. During that day the air temperature never rose above 0.9C (34F). The warmest day was April 10 which had a temperature of 20.7C (69F). The mid-month saw nine ground and four air frosts recorded, this ten day spell being by far the

coldest of the month.

Apart from the extremes, temperatures have been up to expectation with soil temperatures well above normal save at the surface. The highest radiation temperature of 46.6C (116F) on April 11, was well above the expected and mean air temperatures have been slightly above average.

Rainfall was marginally above average at 58mm (2.27in), the bulk of this falling in the final week. The four day period April 23 to 26, produced a fall of 47.5mm (1.87in) or about 89 per cent of the month's total. By far the wettest day was that of the blizzard when a total of 14.2mm (0.56in) fell in 20 hours.

CONDITIONS

There was no rain at all from April 13 to 22, but a cool wind kept conditions far from pleasant. The period allowed for some drying out after a very wet March.

Winds were predominantly northern and blew from this direction for 17 days. The majority of them were quite gentle, averaging 8 mph, but some days were quite windy and on April 26, there was a mean of 25mph with numerous gusts to gale force.

10,000 homes blacked out in weekend snow storms

Most of the 10,000 outlying homes that were blacked out on Sunday when snow brought down the overhead lines had their power restored within 24 hours.

The freak weather cut off people at Kinver, Enville, Romsley, Belbroughton and a small part of Hagley.

The first calls about multiple faults reached the Kidderminster office of the MEB, which covers Kinver, Enville and Belbroughton, in the small hours of Sunday.

An emergency room was immediately set up, and all available personnel called out.

They worked continuously except for short rest breaks, and by breakfast time on

Monday all but 3,200 consumers had their electricity back.

By midnight on Monday only about 100 were left without power, and on Tuesday 60 people—some of them at Whittington Bridge and Cookley—were still waiting.

By Tuesday the Dudley office of the MEB was able to report that all supplies had been restored, except to a solitary consumer at Six Ashes. Between 900-1,000 consumers in the Dudley area, mostly at Romsley and Claverley, suffered an interruption of supplies lasting from two to ten hours.

Mr Cedric Roberts, a Halesowen teacher who runs a climatological station at his home, said it was not so uncommon to get snow in April, but there had been nothing like it since 1950, when there was a fall of two and a half inches on April 24.

But for the thaw, the weekend's snowfall would have been 11 inches deep by Monday morning.

"I think it was the most severe April weather for about a century," said Mr Roberts. "Between Thursday lunch time and Monday morning 1.87 inches of rain fell—89 per cent of the rainfall for the month. And Sunday's daytime temperature of 37F was the lowest for April since 1966.

"The winds were very strong, and from the north. There were many gusts of gale force, and the maximum I recorded was 45 mph.

"On Sunday the mean wind speed was 25 mph for the day, which is very high."