

# Recent storms did little to boost California snowpack

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Here's the bad news: Despite days of precipitation, California's snowpack was barely boosted after a weekend of storms that brought power outages, downed trees, thunderstorms and a threat of tornadoes.

The water was there – dumping more than two inches of rain over Sacramento in just three days – but the temperatures weren't.

Warm weather kept snow from descending below 7,000 feet in the mountains. And much of the snow that did fall was intermingled with rain, making it slushy and wet. Eventually it will contribute to runoff that helps to fill the state's reservoirs, but it will do little for the state's dismal snowpack, which fell to historic lows after the [driest January ever](#) recorded.

It's the same problem the state had in December after a promising onslaught of storms that drenched the Sacramento area, but didn't leave much snow in the mountains. The systems produced runoff that fed the reservoirs, but did little for the snowpack.

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On Friday, [the statewide snowpack](#) was 21 percent of normal for the date, according to the California Department of Water Resources.

Forecasters expected snow to continue to fall overnight Sunday into Monday afternoon. At elevations between 6,500 feet and 7,500 feet, the total snowfall could measure up to 6 inches, forecaster Craig Shoemaker said. Up to a foot of snow could accumulate clear up to 10,000 feet elevation, above which 16 inches or more could fall.

"It's a high-water content kind of snowpack. Real slushy," Shoemaker said. To bolster the snowpack at lower elevations, "we need to have colder storm systems with snow at lower elevation levels. ... If we get it lower and colder, that would give us the kind of water storage that could help us in the future."

But area ski resorts said in the short term, the storms seemed to help matters heading into the typically popular Presidents Day weekend.

Ski resorts near Tahoe reported seeing more than a foot of fresh snow since Friday, thanks to wet weather.

At Northstar California Resort, 13 inches accumulated over about two days along its higher elevations, spokeswoman Cassandra Walker said. Down below, rains soaked the village. Northstar's top elevation is marked at 8,610 feet, while its base sits about 6,330 feet up.

Walker said skiers were grateful for the snowfall but were still hoping for more as February stretches on.

"We could really use the precipitation, that's for sure," she said.

Squaw Valley and Alpine Meadows reported 18 inches of snow and counting as of Sunday morning, and they posited that there could be up to 20 inches of snow on the upper mountain and up to 10 inches down from the mid-mountain down to its base by the time the skies clear on Monday. Their summit elevation tops out at over 9,000 feet.

“With totals of 12 to 18 inches already up top on Squaw and Alpine, it is possible we have storm totals for the weekend of 2 to 3 feet,” manager Bryan Allegretto [wrote on the resort’s website](#).

Thunderstorms continued to loom Sunday evening, threatening to drench areas throughout the Central Valley from Merced up through Tehama County. The storms, which meteorologists said were difficult to predict in terms of timing or severity, were expected to bring with them hail, lightning and the possibility of tornadoes.

Winds up to 30 mph continued to whip through the Sacramento region Sunday evening, but thunderstorms, which create their own “miniweather systems,” could bring stronger gusts and brief onslaughts of heavy rain to areas otherwise expected to see relatively slow-but-steady precipitation into Monday morning, meteorologists warned.

As of 8:20 p.m. Sunday, 2.21 inches of rain had fallen in downtown Sacramento since Friday afternoon, according to the National Weather Service. Nearby, 2.75 inches fell over Sacramento Executive Airport and 2.38 at Sacramento International Airport. Some areas of the foothills were more drenched, with Placerville seeing 4.64 inches since Friday.

National Weather Service forecaster Craig Shoemaker said Executive Airport surpassed its previous record for Feb. 8 by Sunday afternoon. It had 1.34 inches of rain as of 8:20 p.m.; the previous record was 1.22 inches.

Sunday’s round of wet weather followed a relatively quiet Saturday. The 24-hour period starting 9 a.m. Saturday brought one-hundredth of an inch of rain to Sacramento and no more than two-thirds of an inch across the Central Valley after Friday storms left [more than an inch of rain](#) in their wake.

Few power outages were reported Sunday, according to SMUD and Pacific Gas and Electric Co., which struggled Friday to restore power to thousands of customers throughout the Sierra Nevada foothills after lightning and strong winds toppled trees and power lines.

After the storms dissipate, Northern California is in for another warm and dry week, forecasters said, with temperatures about 10 degrees above normal.

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