

NEW YEARS ICE STORM :

Jan 1-2, 1999

Significant ice accumulations caused travel problems across southern Illinois beginning late on New Years Day and continuing through the night. Traffic volume was especially light because it was a holiday weekend. Those who had to be out found roads extremely difficult to navigate. The hardest hit areas, from Carbondale to Benton and West Frankfort, experienced numerous power outages due to snapped tree limbs and power lines. A rural electric co-op reported slow progress in restoring power because of treacherous roads and fallen trees. Estimates of the number of residences without power were around 10,000, primarily in Franklin and Jackson Counties. Ice accumulations were estimated to be one-half to one inch thick in the area from Carbondale to DuQuoin and Mt. Vernon. Shelters were set up for those without heat, but few people took advantage of them. Local emergency rooms reported a sharp increase in slip-and-fall injuries. Dozens of vehicle accidents or mishaps occurred, including a fatal wreck on Interstate 57 about 4 miles south of Mt. Vernon. The governor of Illinois issued a disaster declaration for the entire state.

In southwest Indiana, a period of freezing rain coated surfaces with a quarter to a half inch of ice. Roads became icy and dangerous. A few tree limbs were down.

In western Kentucky, freezing rain coated many surfaces with a quarter to half inch of ice. The heaviest icing was nearest the Illinois state line, from Ballard and McCracken Counties to Union County. The ice was not sufficient to bring down trees or power lines in Western Kentucky. Slick roads contributed to at least two accidents involving serious injuries. Both wrecks occurred in Graves County. In Henderson County, a five-vehicle accident on the southbound U.S. 41 bridge over the Ohio River caused traffic to back up past the Interstate 164 junction. Schools in Union, Webster, and Daviess Counties were closed on the 4th due to icy roads.

Significant ice accumulations occurred over most of southeast Missouri as well late on New Years Day and continuing through New Years night. The heaviest coatings of ice were north and west of Cape Girardeau, especially in Carter, Wayne, Bollinger and Perry Counties, where trees and power lines were brought down. In Butler County, half an inch of ice accumulation was observed in Poplar Bluff. Slick roads kept the Missouri State Highway Patrol busy, giving

troopers a total of 58 accidents during a 12-hour period. A fatal accident near Puxico was blamed on icy road conditions. In a separate incident, Highway 51 just south of Puxico in Stoddard County was closed due to a tractor-trailer that jackknifed. Even the Poplar Bluff Street Department pulled its trucks off the road after one of its trucks slid into a utility pole. A blast of cold air in the wake of the storm rendered road salt very ineffective for ice removal. Prior to the storm, checkout lines at local grocery stores were up to an hour long, and most stores sold out of bread well before the evening of the 1st. Numerous towns cancelled school due to poor road conditions on the 4th.