

A Frigid Start to the New Year

By Don Sutherland

New Year's Day 2018 began on a frigid note. January 1, 2018 was only the fifth New Year's Day on record that saw a low temperature below 10° in New York City. The previous years were:

1875: 7°

1881: 1°

1899: 8°

1918: -4°

With the cold start to 2018, one may wonder whether the New York City area is in the grips of what will likely be a long, snowy winter or whether the severe cold at the start of the New Year will yield to prolonged unseasonable warmth.

Anecdotally, if one looks at all cases where New Year's Day had a low temperature at or below 15° and December snowfall of 6.0" or more, the mean snowfall for such seasons was 35.4". In addition, 67% of cases saw 30" or more seasonal snowfall in New York City while none saw less than 20".

Winters that saw a December snowstorm bring a widespread 4" or greater snowfall to Boston, New York City, and Philadelphia tended to be very snowy in the New York City area. On December 9-10, 2017 a storm blanketed those three cities with 6.1", 4.6", and 4.1" snow respectively.

Below is a list of dates on which such storms occurred and New York City's seasonal snowfall during the course of the winter:

December 3-4, 1957: 44.7"

December 11-13, 1960: 54.7"

December 23-24, 1963: 44.7"

December 23-25, 1966: 51.5"

December 25-28, 1969: 25.6"

December 5, 2002: 49.3"

December 18-21, 2009: 51.4"

The mean snowfall was 46.0".

So, if December's early-season snowstorm and past frigid New Year's Days that preceded a snowier than average December are reasonably representative, one should be prepared for a possibly long, snowy winter in the New York City area.

Bundle up and have a happy New Year.