

Meteorologist Bastardi Says Winter Is on the Way

by Alan M. Petrillo

The winter of 2011-2012 got off to an exceptionally slow start for the Northeast and Atlantic coast states in terms of snowfall and cold temperatures, even considering the recent storm that blanketed a number of states with varying amounts of the white stuff.

But don't put the snow shovels away just yet. Joe Bastardi, former Accuweather meteorologist and the keynote speaker at last Fall's Northeast Regional Carwash Convention in Atlantic City, NJ, says a turnaround in winter weather is near.

"This is a case of delayed snow, not denied snow," Bastardi said. "There's a weather war shaping up, stretching from the southern plains and into New England. I think there will be a great turnaround winter after January."

Some weather experts have theorized that the Northeast and Atlantic coast states are in the grip of a North Atlantic oscillation (NAO), a climatic phenomenon in the North Atlantic Ocean that controls the strength and direction of westerly winds and storm tracks across the North Atlantic. A negative NAO, which some meteorologists say exists now, means weaker winter storms and milder winter temperatures.

Bastardi said there may indeed be a negative NAO index right now, but that the NAO responds to weather systems around it. "It's not a driver, it's a driven," he said.

Bastardi believes a trough of cold weather is making its way East and that "things will turn on a dime in mid-January." He noted that carwash operators hoping for snowstorms followed by a period of sunny, dry weather before the next storm, should check the weather records for the January 15 to February 15, 2007, period.

"Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey and New England will see a period of winter weather very similar to that," he said. "There is a lot more opportunity coming for snowstorms and cold weather. There's a major turnaround in the weather pattern headed our way and much of the United States will be colder than normal from January through the middle to the end of February."

Acknowledging that the current winter, up until now, has been a break from what was experienced on the East coast last year, Bastardi predicted that will change drastically.

"The inland areas of the East Coast and New England are more likely to get some big, crushing snowstorms, not the coastal cities," he said. "The Mid-Atlantic states might have below normal snowfall, but for New England, it will be above normal."

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