

Minnesota Now (MPR) | Minnesota Now The Miller Hill Mall roof collapsed. With more snow on the way, are more buildings at risk? 01GVNTN10AZFZ169F54285G9V0

INTERVIEWER: There's a lot of weather to talk about today, especially in Northeastern Minnesota. Duluth's been buried by nearly 10 feet of snow this winter, so much so that part of the roof of the Miller Hill Mall collapsed earlier this week. That mall's still closed today.

More snow is on the way across Minnesota, and especially Northeastern Minnesota. Here to give us a better picture of what to expect in Duluth and beyond is Ketzle Levens. She's a meteorologist for the National Weather Service in Duluth. Welcome back.

KETZEL Hi. Thanks for having me.

LEVINS:

INTERVIEWER: I usually talk to you at, like, 4 o'clock in the morning or 5 o'clock in the morning. So it's good to visit during the day here.

KETZEL Yeah, when the sun is up and we're all awake.

LEVINS:

INTERVIEWER: Like I said, we've all seen that footage of the roof collapse. It brings to mind, for a lot of us, the Metrodome roof collapse in 2010, also a pretty big snow year. Should folks be worried about this? I mean, it's kind of a big event up there.

KETZEL It is, yeah. The amount of snow on the ground is something that we've certainly been keeping an eye on at the National Weather Service. And it's definitely something to keep in the back of your mind, especially if you're someone who has a smaller outbuilding, greenhouses. [INAUDIBLE] We construct [INAUDIBLE] a building. Right now, on the ground, at least-- I can't speak to what's on folks' roofs. Right now, on the ground, we've got a good 20 to 30 inches of snow depth across the region up here. And we've even got some spots along parts of the North Shore and the South Shore in Lake and Cook County with snow depths of 40 to 50 inches--

INTERVIEWER: Holy cow.

KETZEL --right now. So there's a lot of snow on the ground. And one other thing is just because of the winter we've been having, it's a very liquid-laden snow pack. So we've had a lot of water in many of our snow events, and that water is now sitting in the snow with a liquid equivalent of anywhere from five to eight, even up to 11 inches of liquid equivalent currently in that snow.

INTERVIEWER: I've been watching the radar there, the snow coming up from Lax Lake in Aitkin County this morning. What's the weather like right now in the Twin Ports?

KETZEL Yeah, so our winter storm for today and tomorrow is really just starting to ramp up. We transitioned from a very heavy drizzle over to snow maybe about five minutes before I hopped on the line with you. Here in the Twin Ports, we've been watching that rain snow line kind of slowly make its way up.

So we've got a steady snow at the moment. Something that we're really keeping our eye on this morning is there is a heavier band of snow translating up into Aitkin and Pine County behind that initial transition to snow. And that's got some heavier snowfall rates in it. So, especially, it's going to cut right up the I-35 corridor and into the Twin Ports.

We're looking at snowfall rates of a half to up to one inch per hour, kind of just kind of quick-hitting. And so what that's going to do is it's going to drop visibilities, and it could lead to quick accumulations on the road. For the most part, temperatures are such that road accumulations aren't too much just yet. But this band could have snowfall rates that kind of exceed that limit, and snow quickly accumulates on the roads.

So we're watching that, expecting it to be making its way up the I-35 corridor and into the Twin Ports through the next couple of hours, and then kind of snow across Northeast Minnesota in that period. Rain over much of Northwest Wisconsin will be transitioning to snow this afternoon as well.

INTERVIEWER: And what are you looking at for accumulation for this storm?

KETZEL
LEVENS: That has been the question for the last couple of days. I will give you numbers, but I want to preface this by saying but it's been a pretty interesting storm to forecast. We've been dealing with a lot of forecast model uncertainty and really massive spreads in much of the guidance that we're using.

So right now, for that kind of I-35 corridor up into the Twin Ports, we're looking at storm totals of about four to eight, four to nine inches, plus maybe a little bit higher here in the Twin Ports where we get some extra moisture and a boost off of Lake Superior, currently looking at six to 11 inches for Duluth.

And for the storm literally knocking on our doorstep, these are pretty wide ranges, which is reflecting just how much uncertainty is still within the forecast. Elsewhere, the kind of winner for Minnesota, we're still expecting that to be the Minnesota Arrowhead. Parts of Lake and Cook County could see anywhere from seven to 14 inches, with lesser amounts off to North Central Minnesota, just a couple of inches there. And then--

INTERVIEWER: I wanted to-- we just got a little bit of time left. I wanted to ask you. Last I checked, Duluth was moving pretty smartly up the snowiest winter list. Where does that total stand now, and where might you end up this weekend?

KETZEL
LEVENS: So our current total is at 116.4 inches. And if we get that six to 11 inches, that would obviously push us up into the 120s.

We're currently sitting at ninth overall. So that's the entire winter season. If we get that six to 11, it would push us up into anywhere from the fourth to sixth spot. The overall all-time record is 135.4 inches.

INTERVIEWER: That's a lot of snow. Well, thanks so much, Ketzel.

KETZEL
LEVENS: It is a lot of snow.

INTERVIEWER: Thanks so much, Ketzel. Stay safe. Ketzel is a meteorologist for the National Weather Service in Duluth.