

# Coincidence of Dates?

## The Great Blizzard of 1888 and the One of 2017.

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The meteorological status report for the NY metropolitan area on **March 12, 2017**: With a snow blizzard barreling toward the Northeast, the region ramped up preparations and hurried up warnings, closing schools, canceling all flights and telling residents to get ready. At the end, the storm brought only seven inches of snow to New York City itself, far less than expected.

But north and west of the city and in New England, it was another story. Up to 30 inches (0.8 meter) fell along the New York-Pennsylvania border. At least 200,000 homes lost power across the Northeast.

Now let's bring up what is known as The **Great Blizzard of 1888** (**March 11 – March 14, 1888**) which was one of the most severe recorded blizzards in the history of the United States. The storm, referred to as the **Great White Hurricane**, paralyzed the East Coast from the Chesapeake Bay to Maine, as well as the Atlantic provinces of Canada. Snowfalls of 20–60 inches (0.5-1.5 m) fell in parts of New Jersey, New York, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut, and sustained winds of more than 45 miles per hour (72 km/hr) produced snowdrifts in excess of **50 feet (15 m)**. Railroads were shut down and people were confined to their houses for up to a week. All emergency services were affected. The National Weather Service estimated this 'Nor'easter' dumped as much as 50 inches (1.3 m) of snow in parts of Connecticut and Massachusetts, while parts of New Jersey and New York had up to 40 inches (1 m). Drifts were reported to average 30–40 ft. (0.8-1m) over the tops of houses from New York to New England, with reports of drifts covering three-story houses. It was reported that 58 inches (1.5 m) of snow fell in Saratoga Springs, NY; the storm also produced severe winds; 80 miles per hour (129 km/hr) wind gusts were reported, although the highest official report in New York City

was 40 miles per hour (64 km/hr). New York's Central Park Observatory reported a minimum temperature of 6 °F (-14 °C), and a daytime average of 9 °F (-12.5 °C) on March 13, the coldest ever for March.

In New York, neither rail nor road transport was possible anywhere for days, and drifts across the New York–New Haven rail line at Westport, Connecticut took eight days to clear; transportation gridlock as a result of the storm was partially responsible for the creation of the first underground subway system in the United States, and another opened nine years later in Boston.

The New York Stock Exchange was closed for two days.

Following the storm, New York began placing its telegraph and telephone infrastructure underground to prevent their destruction.

Fire stations were immobilized, and property loss from fire alone was estimated at \$25 million (equivalent to \$670 million in 2017).

From Chesapeake Bay through the New England area, more than 200 ships were either grounded or wrecked, resulting in the deaths of at least 100 seamen. Severe flooding occurred after the storm due to melting snow, especially in the Brooklyn area. **More than 400 people died** from the storm and the ensuing cold, including **200 in New York City** alone.

Is history repeating itself? Possibly. **Therefore never take Mother Nature for granted!!!**