



# THE ATMOSPHERIC RESERVOIR

*Examining the Atmosphere and Atmospheric Resource Management*

## A FRIGID FEBRUARY

By Mark D. Schneider

Even for North Dakota standards, this February was unusually cold and snowy. Minot and Williston recorded their second coldest February (only February 1936 was colder) with average monthly temperatures of only -2.4°F and -4.5°F.

Average February Monthly Temperatures		
City	Year 1936	Year 2019
Bismarck	-11.4°F	-0.4°F
Dickinson	-12.8°F	-0.5°F
Fargo	-9.7°F	0.6°F
Grand Forks (UND)	-13.1°F	-0.4°F
Jamestown	-12.8°F	-1.0°F
Minot	-15.2°F	-2.4°F
Williston	-13.6°F	-4.5°F

Another indicator of the cold weather across our state can be seen when looking at the number of days in February that each reporting station had low temperatures of 0°F or below; Grand Forks (Airport) recorded 26 days, Fargo and Hettinger had 25 days, Garrison 24 days, Bismarck, Dickinson, Minot, and Williston all had 23 days, and Jamestown had 21 days.

Some North Dakotans may remember the record cold of February 1936, when the air temperature bottomed out at -60°F in Parshall on the 15th of that month. Bernice Lee, who lived on a farm between Parshall and New Town, recalls walking outside on that frigid day and looking

east towards Parshall. "I was outside pumping water from our well on that beautiful, sunny day and remember the air being very still. It felt cold, but I didn't realize how cold it was until I heard reports later that day. I remember seeing what looked like buildings on the horizon that were apparently mirages from the cold air."

Of the reporting sites that record snowfall, impressive above-average totals between two and four times the 1981-2010 February climate normals were witnessed. The Grand Forks (UND) observing site recorded an all-time record snowfall of 27.0", which surpassed the previous record of 19.6" set back in both 1943 and 1922! Fargo set a February snowfall record of 21.4".

February 2019 Snowfall vs. 1981-2010 Climate Normals		
City	Year 2019	Normal
Bismarck	15.7"	8.1
Fargo	21.4"	7.0"
Grand Forks (UND)	27.0"	6.9"
Jamestown	20.1"	6.1"
Minot	18.8"	5.0"

If you were witness to North Dakota's cold and snow this February, there's good justification for your "spring fever." Just imagine what the year 1936 would have been like (if you weren't alive back then) without all the forced air furnaces and creature comforts that we're fortunate enough to have now.