

Weekend storm offers first chance of snow for parts of Northeast and mid-Atlantic in nearly 2 years

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Winter may finally arrive in the Northeast and mid-Atlantic in the form of a weekend storm that has the potential to hit the region with its first decent snow in nearly two years.

But it's simply too early to say which parts of these regions will see snow — or how much will fall — with the storm's arrival still five days away. Those outcomes will depend heavily on the storm's timing, intensity and track, which are still highly uncertain given the system responsible for it is still thousands of miles away, off the West Coast of the US.

What is known is that an active Pacific storm track typical of an El Niño winter will send a series of storms across the US into next week, presenting the highest chance for impactful snow so far this winter in some of the country's most populous areas on the East Coast.

The system responsible for the potential winter weather will first cross the southern half of the US through Friday, before swooping up the East through the weekend.

In much of the South this will mean a cool rain. Eastern Texas, Louisiana and southern Mississippi, all still suffering from drought after a summer of extreme heat and a lack of rain, are in the bull's-eye for what would be largely beneficial rain.

Rain will begin Thursday evening in eastern Texas and progress with the storm's track to the east, overrunning the Southeast and parts of the mid-Atlantic with time. This storm could cause flooding issues in the South, particularly in areas that get drenched on Tuesday and Wednesday by another wet system.

Confidence in the storm's exact track drops after it leaves the Southeast. The forecast models on Tuesday agreed an impactful storm will track through the mid-Atlantic and Northeast and deliver significant snow where there's cold air, but differed on how much snow could fall and where.

“Heavy precipitation will spread across the Southeast/Mid-Atlantic and possibly the Northeast this coming weekend, with increasing potential for heavy snow to the north and west of the low,” the Weather Prediction Center said. “Exact amounts and precipitation type for some of the major East Coast cities remains highly uncertain at this point, but does need to be watched.”

The highest confidence for significant snow was in higher elevation areas of the Appalachians and the interior Northeast, including central Pennsylvania.

With heavy precipitation expected, the key question will be where it falls as snow and where it falls as rain, especially along the highly populated I-95 corridor from Washington, DC, to Boston.

If even an inch of snow were to fall there, it would end significant snowless streaks for some major cities that have dragged on for nearing two years.

New York City has waited nearly 700 days for an inch of snow in a single calendar day. Only 2.3 inches fell in Central Park during the entirety of 2023, making it the city’s least snowy calendar year on record, according to the National Weather Service. The same was true for Philadelphia and the DC area’s Dulles International Airport.

It’s not as if the Northeast has gone without precipitation. In mid-December, a powerful and deadly coastal storm knocked out power to hundreds of thousands and triggered severe flooding across the region.

But it’s just been too warm for precipitation to fall as snow, something that’s becoming more common as global temperatures rise because of planet-warming fossil fuel pollution.

Much of the US endured a warmer-than-average December. The warmer temperatures meant snow was harder to come by. As a result, snow cover, or how much land is covered by snow, is at its lowest extent in North America since 2005, NOAA data shows.