

How accurate were Philly forecasters' snow predictions? We grade them.

 philly.com/philly/news/weather/how-much-snow-totals-philadelphia-nws-nbc10-6abc-fox29-cbs3-weather-nj-20180322.html

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The buildup to this week's coastal storm featured a lot of different snowfall forecasts. Some were right. Some were wrong.

We kept an eye on what the TV stations, the National Weather Service, and regional weather blogs were predicting. Now that the final snow totals are in, we're issuing grades for each forecast:

- A – Nailed it
- B – Mostly accurate
- C – Could have been better
- D – Disappointing
- F – Way off

We based these grades on each group's final snow map but also accounted for last-minute changes leading up to them. Ultimately, snowfall totals ranged from 15.2 inches in Pottstown to 7.6 in Philadelphia to 6 in Atlantic City.

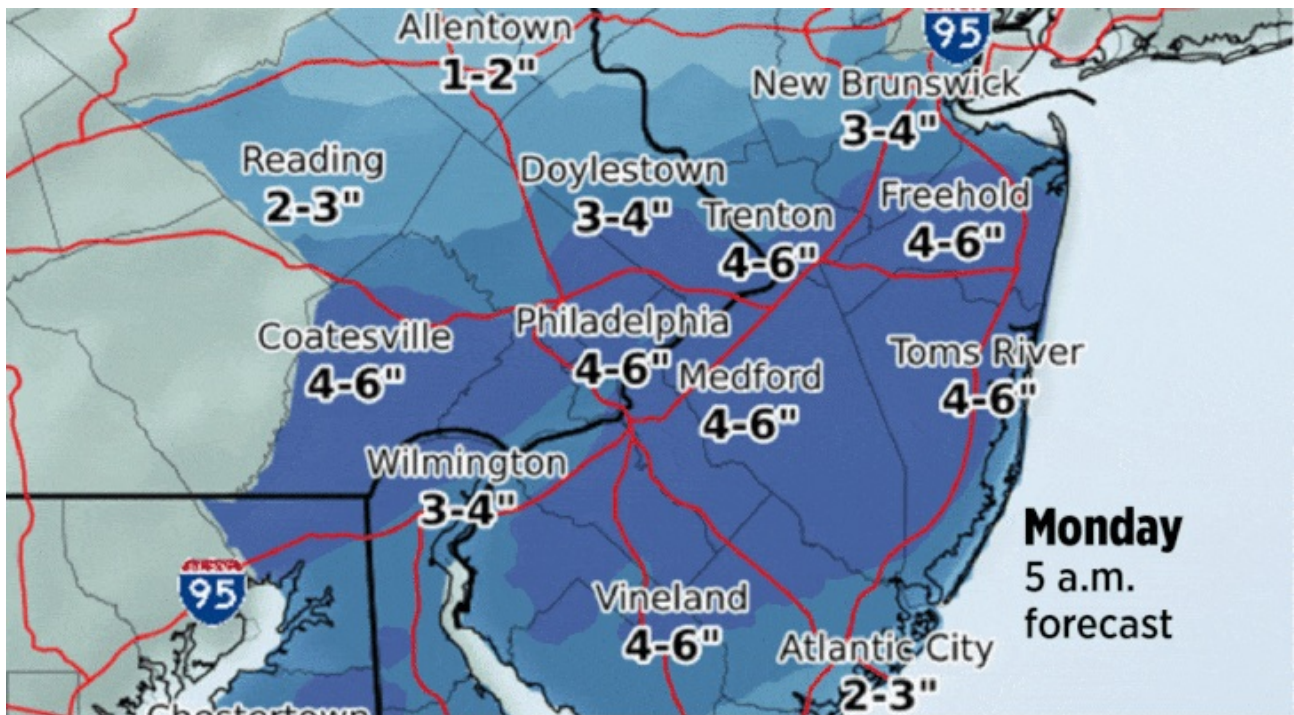
Keep in mind: Despite great technological advances in weather forecasting, predicting the future is still hard. And Mother Nature always throws last-minute curve balls. So give your meteorologists a pat on the back, even if they didn't exactly get it right.

National Weather Service: C

The weather service went a little bonkers when it suggested at least 16 inches and “extreme impact” for Philadelphia. “We continue to need to sound the siren,” it said in a briefing Tuesday evening. In the wee hours of Wednesday, the weather service revised that projection to eight to 12 inches, which made more sense. We give them credit for coming down to earth but deduct grades for their dire predictions early on, leaving them with a C.

The weather service's evolving forecast

Here's how the National Weather Service's predicted snow totals changed for this week's storm.



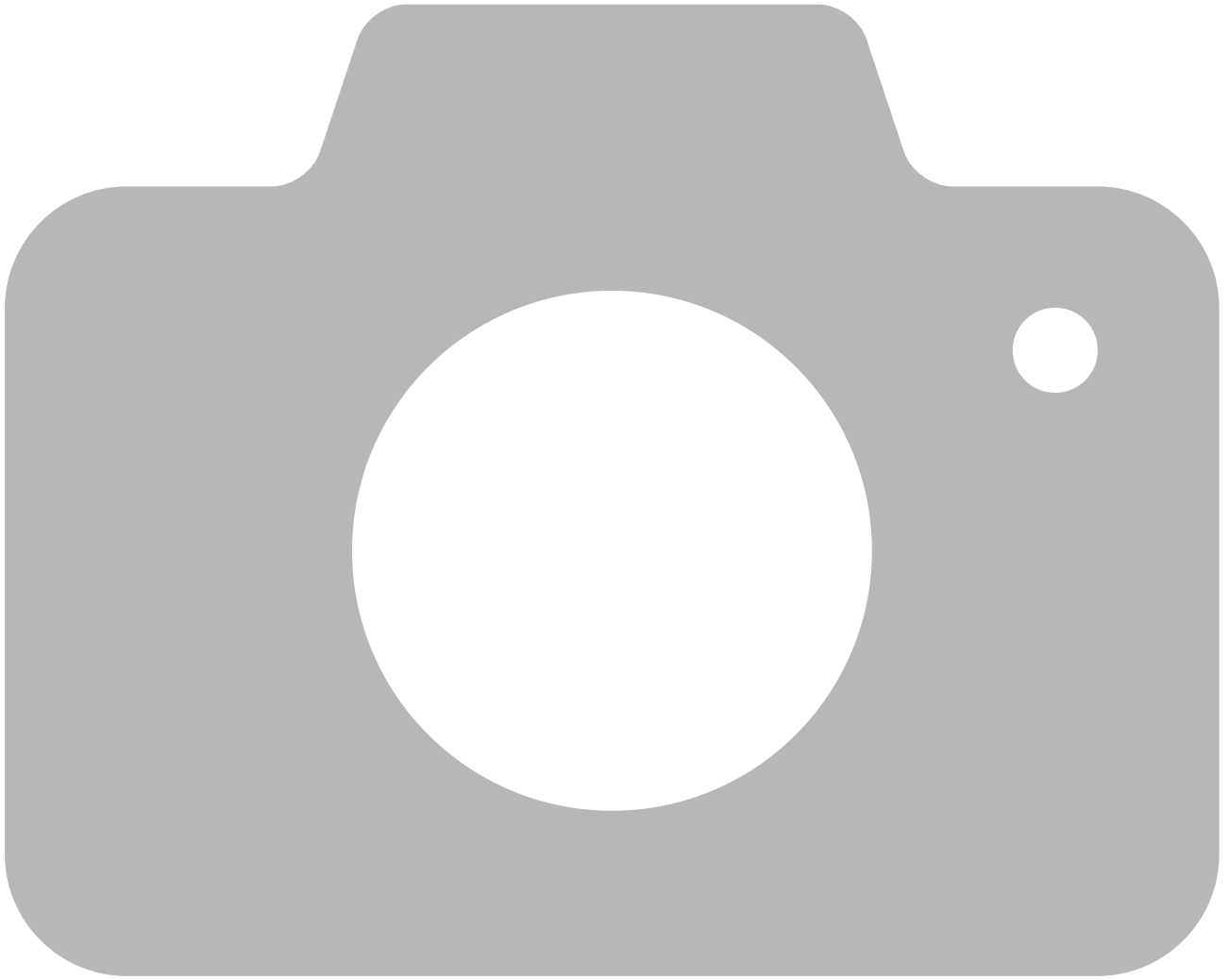
SOURCE: National Weather Service

Staff Graphic

NBC10: B

NBC got ahead of itself around sunrise Wednesday, when it predicted eight to 14 inches in Philadelphia and much of the region. A few hours later, those totals were deducted to six to 12 for Philadelphia. At least they adjusted, which we judged worthy of a B.





Screenshot

Snowfall forecast as of 10:30 a.m. Wednesday on NBC10.

6ABC: B

At one point, the station suggested the possibility of at least a foot in Philadelphia. ABC adjusted that zone to northwest of the city on Wednesday and largely stuck with its prediction of eight to 12 inches across the region, earning a solid B.

Fox 29: C

If anything, Fox started too low. It was predicting six to nine inches in the Philadelphia region, while others were calling for six to 12.

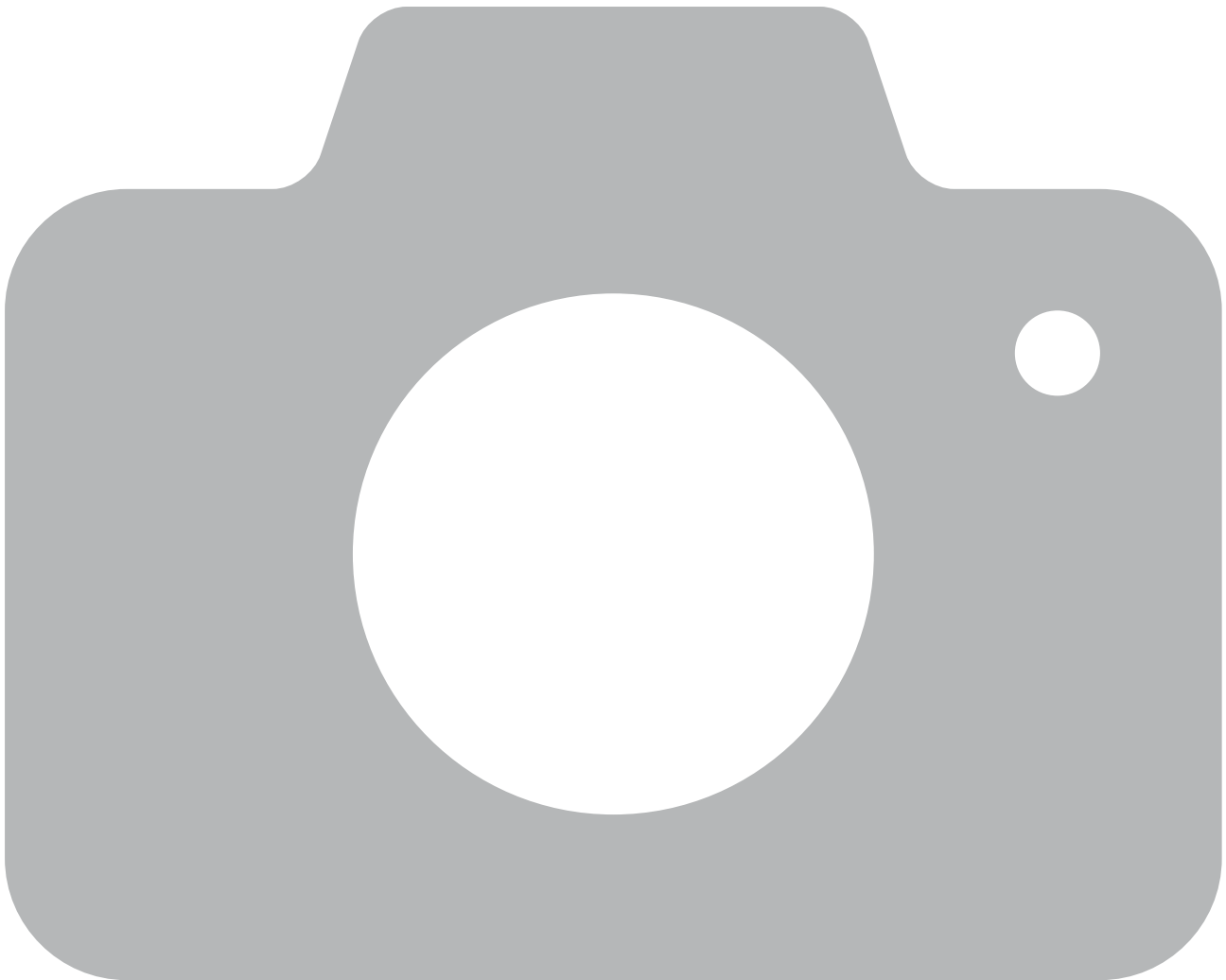
To be fair, Kathy Orr mentioned early on that some areas could get a foot and later revised her prediction to six to 12 inches, so we only deduct a grade for that. But a separate blunder happened when another meteorologist at the station seemed to discount the storm Wednesday morning, saying the forecasts for eight-inch-plus totals across the region were in jeopardy. Some were. But a lot weren't.

CBS3: B

CBS's Kate Bilo suggested Tuesday evening that up to 16 inches of snow could fall in Philadelphia, and another meteorologist, Lauren Casey, said the record for the biggest March snowfall in Philadelphia (12 inches in 1993) could be in "some big-time jeopardy."

That didn't happen.





But CBS was right about one thing: Many areas northwest of Philadelphia neared or exceeded a foot (Norristown recorded 13 inches). And on Wednesday, the station seemed to suggest more along the lines of six to 12 inches for Philadelphia. So they get a B.

Weather NJ/Eastern PA Weather Authority: C

The weather blogs went both too high and too low.

On Tuesday evening, they predicted 10 to 14 inches in Philadelphia. On Wednesday, they revised that to five to 10 inches (below), which was the right call.

But they also only predicted one to three inches along the Shore in South Jersey. Atlantic City ended up with six inches, and many other nearby towns reported close to that.

Because of that flop and the last-minute changes, Weather NJ and Eastern PA Weather Authority get a C. (Bobby Martrich, who runs the Eastern PA site, disputed the grade Thursday and pointed out that last-minute changes aren't a bad thing, particularly for a storm in March).

Overall, nobody's forecast was perfect, but nobody's was terrible, either. Had this been the apology storm of January 2015, we would have given out a lot more D's and F's. Thankfully that wasn't the case.

What do you think: Were we too harsh? Too lenient? Share your thoughts below.

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