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February 2009 – Pennsylvania Weather Recap

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In Punxsutawney, Pa, the world's most famous groundhog, Punxsutawney Phil, spotted his shadow on February 2nd which is supposed to translate to six more weeks of winter. With the weather Pennsylvanians experienced at the beginning of the month, this long range forecast seemed mighty believable.

Much of the eastern part of the Commonwealth saw significant snow accumulation on February 3rd through the 4th as the first Nor' Easter of the year slid up the coast. Stations in the southeastern Pennsylvania region reported snowfall totals averaging from 4" to 6" (10-15cm) with isolated bands of snow totaling 8" to 10" (20-25cm). After the system moved out of the region, cold air from Canada moved into the Commonwealth on February 5th and 6th pushing lows down to the negative digits in some parts. Bradford Regional Airport (KBFD) recorded a low temperature of -11F/-24C during the evening hours of February 5th.

Things drastically changed by the weekend of February 7th as warmer air moved into the region preceding the next low pressure system. The warming trend continued through February 11th with temperatures reaching highs in the low 50s (10-12C) to upper 60s (near 20C) across much of the Commonwealth. Philadelphia International Airport (KPHL) reported a high temperature of 69F/21C on February 11th. New record highs were set for Williamsport, Harrisburg, Allentown, Reading, and Philadelphia on both the 11th and 12th.

Temperatures remained above freezing while the low moved through Pennsylvania during the nighttime hours of the 11th and 12th. Although snow and ice were not a problem, winds ravaged the Commonwealth. The Storm Prediction Center's records showed twenty severe weather reports of wind damage from just the western part of Pennsylvania. The average gusting winds associated with the system ranged from 50 to 60mph (20-25m/s).

Pleasant conditions developed across the Commonwealth making for an enjoyable Valentine's Day and President's Day weekend. This pattern changed on the 18th and 19th as a low-pressure system trekked northeast along the Appalachian Mountains bringing light to moderate snow showers to Pennsylvania. Much of the Commonwealth received 0.5 to 5 inches (1-12cm) of snow with the liquid equivalent ranging from 0.1 to 0.6 inches (3-18mm).

On George Washington's birthday, February 22nd, a clipper system passed through the region bringing snow to the western half of the Commonwealth. After a minor cool down from the 23rd to the 25th, much of Pennsylvania saw a return to above-average temperatures.

For the month of February, the Commonwealth had maximum and minimum temperatures that did not depart much from the mean (most sections were within 1F/0.4C of normal). However, precipitation was a different story.

Much of the region measured below normal precipitation. Harrisburg was 2.33 inches below the average for the month. The National Weather Service Cooperative Observer site located at Chalk Hill in Fayette County recorded the maximum total precipitation of 3.52 inches for the month of February. The maximum total snowfall recorded was 34 inches in Laurel Summit, Somerset County.

Here are the weather extremes across Pennsylvania (**observations taken at 8AM EDT**) during February 2009 from the NWS Cooperative & ASOS Networks. The extremes occurred in the 24-hour period prior to the date listed.

Parameter	Location	Value	Date (8 AM EDT)	County
Highest Temperature	Connellsville	71°F	February 12 th	Fayette
Lowest Temperature	Chandler's Valley	-22°F	February 6 th	Warren
Greatest Cumulative Liquid Precipitation	Chalk Hill	3.52"	-	Fayette
Greatest Daily Snowfall	Laurel Summit	34"	-	Somerset