

Stormy weather

Thursday, November 22, 1979

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Worrying about February? Take a look at November's record

Though high winds and heavy precipitation may occur in Michigan at any time of the year, November brings the most treacherous storms to the state. Ceel Van Den Brink, Michigan State University Cooperative Extension Service weather specialist, says that changes in temperature at this time of year and the presence of the Great Lakes all around Michigan are responsible for the destructive storms of November.

During this month, heavy losses of life and property have occurred throughout Michigan's history. Seven times more shipwrecks occur in November than in any other month.

"At this time of year, there are still large concentrations of warm air coming from the south while cold air is trying to move in from the arctic," Van Den Brink explains. "An intense low-pressure system develops in this situation and causes extremely strong winds."

Because the lakes are still relatively warm in November, storms are able to pick up large supplies of moisture as they go over the water. This is why heavy snowfalls sometimes occur during the month.

According to National Weather Service information on major storms in this century, the worst storm ever to hit the Great Lakes occurred on Nov. 9, 1913. The waters around the entrance to Saginaw Bay, described as a "seething mass" by some survivors, claimed

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more than 200 lives, sunk eight boats and stranded 10 others.

ANOTHER MAJOR storm occurred on Armistice Day (Nov. 11) 1940. Extensive property damage occurred in all parts of Michigan. During a storm

that hit Nov. 25-27, 1965, winds reportedly reached 75 miles per hour. They ripped roofs off houses and felled trees in many areas of the state.

The most recent destructive storm, which resulted in the loss of 29 lives when the Edmund Fitzgerald went

down in Lake Superior, took place Nov. 10, 1975.

Van Den Brink says it is not wise to take pleasure boats out on the Great Lakes in November.

"I try to point out to people that November is a stormy month and that they should be very careful if they are going out on the lakes," he says. "You don't play games with the weather at this time of year."

Jim Humphreys, MSU district Extension marine agent in Marquette, advises boaters to head for shelter whenever the wind rises and the water starts to get rough. He encourages boaters to learn how to recognize weather signs that warn of storms before taking long trips far from the

shore. And he emphasizes that all boaters need to have a radio on board.

The greatest damage from November storms usually occurs in Lakes Superior and Michigan, because most storms come from the west, Van Den Brink explains. At times, however, heavy winds blow in off Huron and Erie, creating large snowstorms on the eastern side of the state.

The Great Lakes significantly affect Michigan weather throughout the year, he points out. In November and December, the lakes are warmer than the cold air masses moving over them. The condensation that occurs then is responsible for the frequently heavy cloud cover across the state.



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