

# LOCALNEWS

## Stay smart about the cold

### Falls sets record for low temperature

BY EMILY GEDDE  
Staff Writer

After 11 consecutive days of below-zero temperatures, Mother Nature will ease up on the frigid air hovering over Borderland – but not for long.

International Falls set a record Sunday morning with a low temperature of 32 degrees below zero. The National Weather Service reported it was 1 degree lower than the previous record for Dec. 15 — 31 below zero, set in 1975.

“The area has seen below-normal temperatures since Dec. 5 and it has been all downhill from there,” Mike Stewart, meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Duluth, said Monday of the cold air. “Temperatures will start to ease up Tuesday and into Wednesday, which has a high of 19 degrees. We’ll have a small break from the really cold air, but we’ll be right back into it by the weekend.”

The culprit of the cold snap in the middle of December is a weather pattern stretching down from northern Canada, Stewart explained. He said the air flow has allowed northern Minnesota to tap into the arctic air making December’s thermometer readings similar to what is seen in January.

“There has been no sun up (in northern Canada) and a pool of cold weather has built up and swept down to us,” he said. “(In-

ternational Falls) has had weather like this at the beginning of December before, but it’s been awhile... at least 15 years.”

In fact, the meteorologist said at the halfway point through the month, Borderland is 16.3 degrees below the normal monthly temperature. The last time the area experienced 11 consecutive days of below-zero temperatures was in January of 2003.

“It’s going to stay cold,” Stewart added. “Be prepared for at least another week of very cold weather.”

#### ACCURATE FORECASTING

As temperatures plunge across the state, Sen. Amy Klobuchar has been advocating for funding to help ensure accurate weather forecasting that is vital to saving lives.

At a commerce subcommittee hearing, which Klobuchar started out by announcing the current temperature in International Falls, she discussed the need to strengthen and modernize the National Weather Service and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to ensure they can make timely and accurate forecasts.

“In a state like Minnesota where winters can drop well below freezing, accurate weather forecasts aren’t just a matter of convenience – they’re a matter of life and death,” Klobuchar said in a release. “It’s absolutely critical that organizations like the National Weather Service and NOAA have the tools and resources they need to do their job and minimize the impact of severe weather.”

During the hearing, Alaska Sen. Mark Begich – whose father grew up in Minnesota – noted last week it was colder in northern Minnesota than it was above the Arctic Circle.

#### STAY PREPARED

Stewart said with more cold air on the way, people need to “be smart” when venturing outdoors.

“Dress in layers,” he said. “Make sure exposed skin is covered...Frostbite in these temperatures can occur in as little as 15-20 minutes, especially in the face. Seek shelter if you start getting cold.”

Just recently, a 19-year-old University of Minnesota freshman was found dead along the Mississippi River. Police suspect he may have frozen to death. In Duluth, another 19-year-old University of Minnesota Duluth student nearly froze to death after falling asleep on a neighbor’s porch following a night of heavy drinking with friends. The student could lose limbs as a result of frostbite.

“Watch out for others in the cold,” Stewart said. “If you’re out partying, make sure your friends get inside. In Minnesota, we are used to cold weather, but it can still be a problem.”

The meteorologist also urged motorists to carry a winter survival kit in their vehicles. Among other items, he said the kit should for sure include a blanket, energy bars, matches or a lighter and a shovel.

“We need people to stay prepared for the cold and snow,” he said. “This is Minnesota. Winter is going to stick around for awhile.”



FILE PHOTO

And they’re off. Falls Elementary first grade teacher Terry Mason leads a group of youngsters who participated in last year’s Christmas Eve 1-kilometer Reindeer Run.

## Festive Reindeer Run returns

BY EMILY GEDDE  
Staff Writer

In an effort to raise money for International Falls public elementary schools art programs, members of district’s I Falls Partners in Education will play host to the third annual Reindeer Run Christmas Eve.

The 1 kilometer and 5 kilometer run and walk will begin at 9:30 a.m. Dec. 24.

Proceeds from the Reindeer Run will benefit the Wishing Willow Program, an effort developed last year by committee. The Reindeer Run costs \$5 for children in the 1K; and \$5 for the 5K and up to \$20 per family. Late registration for the 5K, which starts at 10 a.m. Christmas Eve, is \$10.

I Falls Partners in Education was formerly known as the Parent Involvement Committee.

Member Jenn Windels said money raised from the festive run this year will focus on the purchase of art supplies for classroom activities.

“There are a couple other things on our list, but the focus will be on supplies for art projects,” she said.

Unlike other years, Windels said this year the event secured Rainy Lake Medical Center as a sponsor. The sponsorship, according to Windels, will allow organizers to purchase more prizes that will hopefully draw in additional participants.

“We’ll use this sponsorship for prizes that promote family wellness activities,” she said. “It’s really exciting.”

The Reindeer Run will be held at Falls Elementary School with additional contests held for ugliest sweater, most festive, best elf and jingliest.

Participants, volunteers and supporters are asked to get into the holiday spirit by wearing Santa hats, jingle bells and elf ears.

The route begins at Falls Elementary School, 1414 14th Ave., travels through the Stenberg Addition, east to Seventh Avenue, north to Seventh Street, west to 13th Avenue, north to Ninth Street

and back to the school via 11th Street and 15th Avenue.

Windels said she is crossing her fingers for good weather and an increase in participation.

“It is a great way to kick off Christmas Eve,” she said of the run. “People can get outside with that fresh air and get some exercise in... And they can do it with their entire family. It’ll get everyone in a festive mood for the rest of the day.”

For more information on the Wishing Willow program and its needs, as well as on the Reindeer Run – such as the registration form – go online to [www.isd361.k12.mn.us/districtwide/pic.shtml](http://www.isd361.k12.mn.us/districtwide/pic.shtml). Children under 18 will need a parent or legal guardian’s signature.

Checks can be made out in Windels’ name and sent with registration forms to 3217 County Road 24, International Falls, MN 56649. She also can be reached via email at [baker\\_jennifer@yahoo.com](mailto:baker_jennifer@yahoo.com). Forms and payments will also be accepted in the main offices of the district’s schools.



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