

# This winter could be worse

Season is mild compared to brutal 2014

By Nick Crow

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JANESVILLE

Southern Wisconsin is in the midst of a cycle of arctic outbreaks that could last the rest of February, said Rudy Schaar, meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Sullivan.

But it could be worse.

According to Gazette weather records, the temperature fell below zero on 12 days in February last winter before the 16th. This winter, belowzero temperatures were recorded on only five days in that time.

Days with high temperatures below freezing were also higher last year with 16 last February and 11 this winter.

“What’s happening is we are having one arctic event after another,” Schaar said. “We have a good northwest flow caused by high pressure out of the west coast bringing cold front after cold front to the area.

“It’s bringing arctic air in for a couple days. Then it’s moderate. Then comes the next one,” he said. “I see the same pattern holding for at least the next two weeks.”

David Botts, Janesville utility director, said the weather has been mild compared to last year’s deep freeze, leading to fewer pipes freezing and breaking this year.

“Last winter was cold for such an extended period of time that it pushed frost deep into the earth, which had an effect on water service,” Botts said. “This winter, the cold doesn’t penetrate the ground as much off the streets because of the snow cover.”

Botts said he believes the frost is about 3 feet deep this winter. Last winter, it was 8 feet below the surface, he said.

“If it gets down below 5 feet, it will create problems,” Botts said. “Then it gets to a depth where laterals are located.”

Water mains are under the streets, and laterals connect them to homes and businesses, Botts said. Last year, service laterals that come off the main lines and valve boxes at property lines were freezing and bursting. Snow cover this winter has helped in sulfate the ground to protect pipes from the cold, Botts said.

“We’ve had some water main breaks, typical for the winter season, but nothing extraordinary at this point or out of the normal,” Botts said. “We are monitoring water temperatures and sent notices to customers who may have concerns.

“We touch base with them to make sure they keep their meter warm and make sure they have heat around pipes where they come in the house,” he said.

The area should be warming a bit this time of year, Schaar said, but a cold snap in February is not out of the ordinary.

“It’s not unusual for cold to drag into March,” Schaar said.

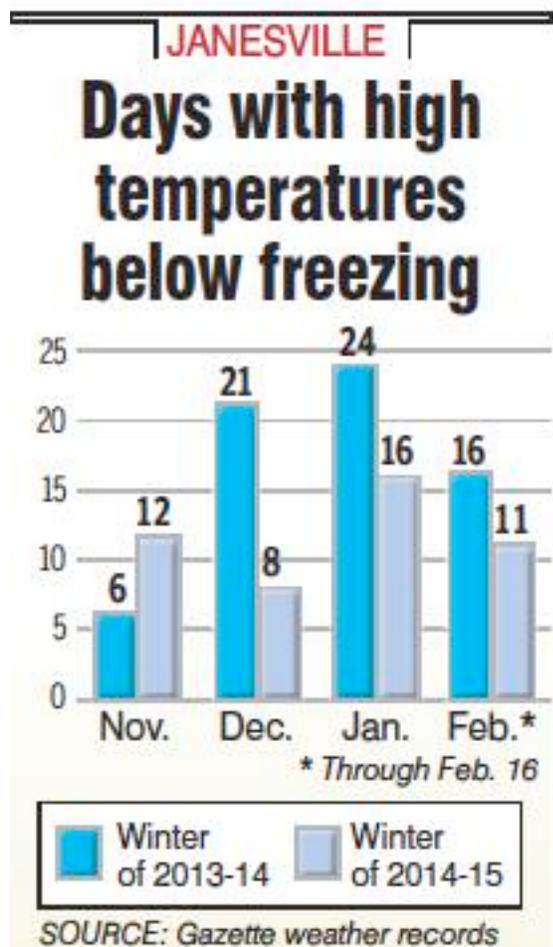
Temperatures Wednesday night were expected to reach minus 7 with wind chills of minus 20. Thursday’s high is expected to be 4 degrees with wind chills of minus 20, Schaar said.

Thursday night temperatures are expected to be minus 9 degrees with wind chills hitting minus 15. A wind chill advisory was in effect from Wednesday evening until 6 p.m. Thursday.

Friday brings a chance of an inch or less of snow with temperatures in the 20s. Saturday’s high could reach 30 degrees, and Sunday temperatures will again dip below zero at night, Schaar said.

“It’s an up-and-down roller coaster effect that we’re getting,” Schaar said.

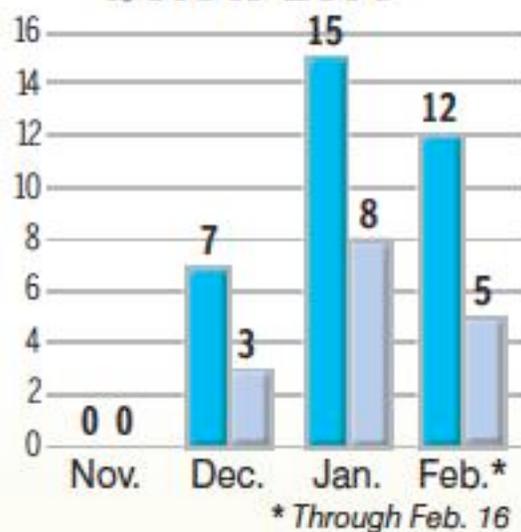
“I see it being a lot more of the same,” he said.



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## JANESVILLE

# Days with low temperatures below zero



■ Winter of 2013-14    ■ Winter of 2014-15

SOURCE: Gazette weather records

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