



Left: Snow covered sedan in Zapata (city), courtesy of Tony Elizondo of Zapata County Sheriff Department. **Right:** Snow covered pickup cap and rooftop in Zapata (city), courtesy of Alfonso “Poncho” Lopez of Zapata County.

Let it Snow, Let it...SNOW??

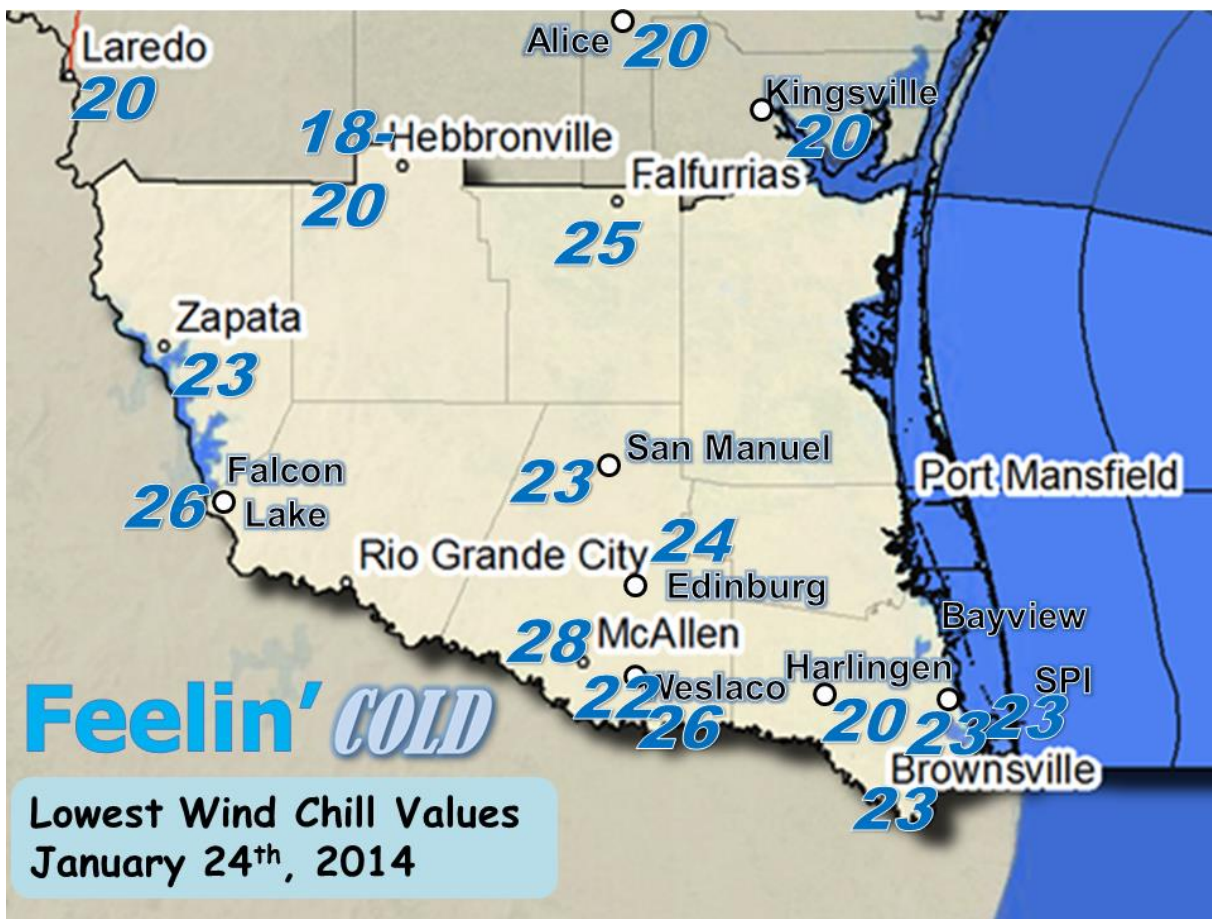
Pockets of Light Snow and Sleet Bring True Touch of Winter, Jan. 24th 2014

An arctic front sliced across the Deep South Texas ranchlands and Rio Grande Valley during the evening of January 23rd, crashing temperatures from the balmy upper 70s into the lower 40s in a matter of 3 to 4 hours after sunset. By midnight, temperatures had fallen into the mid to upper 30s across the Rio Grande Plains ranch lands of Jim Hogg and Zapata County, and occasional light rain or drizzle was common. By daybreak of the 24th, near freezing temperatures at the surface and additional cooling above the surface combined with just enough moisture to change the light rain to light snow across the Rio Grande Plains, which mixed with sleet toward Hebbronville. The brief period of mid morning snow left a rare coating in Zapata; the first snow in these areas since [February 3rd and 4th, 2011](#). Unlike that event, which coated bridges and overpasses with glaze ice and featured up to 60 hours of freezing temperatures, the winter “wonderland” was fleeting; ground and road temperatures remained well above freezing and the air temperatures followed by mid to late afternoon. Farther east, a some folks noted hints of light sleet across the lower and mid Valley as temperatures fell to 34°F. The precipitation in these areas was not enough to wet the ground.

Other Impacts and Stats

- **Wind Chill, or “Feels Like” Temperature**, fell into the low and mid 20s before daybreak and held through early afternoon on the 24th (below). North winds 20 to 30 mph near the coast and 15 to 25 mph inland ensured a raw, nasty day.
- **Actual Temperature** touched 40° just before sunset across most of the area. Had readings held in the 30s, January 24th would have marked the first time since February 3, 2011, that daytime temperatures failed to reach the 40°F.

- **Wind** frequently gusted to 35 to 40 mph near the coast, and up to 30 mph inland, across the Rio Grande Valley from the combined effect of the sharp cold air surge and a trough of low pressure across the western Gulf. The gusty winds combined with increased statewide demand for power caused up to 17,500 outages across the Rio Grande Valley on the 24th, including 8500 in the Port Isabel/Laguna Vista/Bayview/SPI area, and up to 9000 in the mid Valley (Weslaco/McAllen, etc.) Peak wind gusts included:
 - 48 mph at South Padre Island Coast Guard (bayside)
 - 46 mph at Rincon del San Jose (Land Cut/Laguna Madre Kenedy County)
 - 45 mph at McAllen/Miller Airport
 - 43 mph at South Padre Island
 - 40 mph at Bayview/Cameron County Airport
 - 38 mph at Harlingen/Valley Airport
 - 37 mph at Brownsville/SPI Airport
 - 35 mph at Weslaco/Mid Valley Airport
 - 35 mph at Edinburg Int'l Airport
- **Full Blown Gales** covered the Gulf and Laguna Madre for much of the wee hours and post daybreak hours of the 24th; sea heights built from less than 3 feet to nearly 16 feet in less than 12 hours at the buoy 35 nautical miles east northeast of Port Mansfield, and winds gusted to 35 knots for most of the evening and overnight of the 23rd/24th.
- **The Sharp Change** from one day to the next marked the fifth time during the 2013/2014 cool season that temperatures fell 30°F or more from the day before the front to 2 PM the day after the front. This was the sharpest change yet at Harlingen; the high of 78°F during the late afternoon of January 23rd sank to a bone chilling 37°F at 2 PM on the 24th – a 41 degree crash. Other sharp changes occurred November 22/23 2013, December 5/6 2013, December 29/30 2013, and January 5/6 2014.





Light Snow coating brush and trees in Zapata, Texas (via Facebook through Nancy Cowling Umphres).