

Flood Timeline

November 1996

16-17 – It was an early start to winter as blizzard “Andy” drops 12 inches of snow on the region.

December

16-18 – Five days before the official start of winter, blizzard “Betty” brings more than 8 inches of snow.

20 – Blizzard “Christopher,” the second such storm in a week, drops an additional 4 inches of snow.

January 1997

9-11 – Blizzard “Doris” produces more than 8 inches of snow; wind chills plummet to 80 degrees below zero.

11 – The North Dakota National Guard is activated to clear snow from roadways.

12 – President Clinton declares North Dakota, South Dakota and Minnesota federal disaster areas, clearing the way for reimbursement of certain storm-related costs.

14-16 – Blizzard “Elmo” arrives with bitter cold temperatures, prompting Minnesota Governor Arne Carlson to close all Minnesota schools.

22-23 – The sixth snowstorm of the winter, blizzard “Franzi” drops another 8 inches of snow on the region.

February

28 – The National Weather Service forecasts a river crest of 47.5 – 49 feet at Grand Forks, potentially surpassing the third-highest flood of record (48.81 feet) in 1979.

March

4 – Blizzard “Gust”, the valley’s seventh blizzard, adds to the region’s record snowfall.

April

3 – Sandbagging and levee building begin in greater Grand Forks.

4 – In addition to 6 inches of snow, blizzard “Hannah” also brings freezing rain that leaves 300,000 valley residents without power.

4 – The Red River reaches 28 feet, its official flood stage.

7 – The Red River rises to 38.27 feet.

7 – For the second time in a year, President Clinton declares North Dakota a federal disaster area.

8 – Governor Ed Schafer activates the National Guard to help with flood fighting efforts and blizzard recovery.

11 – The National Weather Service predicts the Red River will crest during the week of April 20-27.

11 – Levee walking begins in East Grand Forks.

14 – The Red River rises to 44.43 feet in Grand Forks.

14 – The National Weather Service raises its crest prediction to 50 feet.

15 – The Point Bridge closes in East Grand Forks.

16 – The Red River surpasses 1979’s crest of 48.88 feet.

16 – The National Weather Service revises its crest prediction to 50.5 feet.

17 – The Red River reaches 50.96 feet. The National Weather Service raises its crest prediction to 51.5 feet.

18 – Grand Forks orders evacuation of Lincoln Park neighborhood as boils appear in the levee.

18 – Evacuation of Riverside and Central Park neighborhoods.

18 – National Weather Service raises the predicted crest to 53 feet for April 18 or 19.

18 – The Point neighborhood of East Grand Forks floods after levee is breached.

18 – The Point area is ordered to evacuate as sirens sound.

18 – National Weather Service raises predicted crest to 54 feet for April 19.

18 – The Red River of the North reaches 52.62 feet, rising 18 inches in 18 hours.

18 – An earthen levee near the Kennedy Bridge fails, cutting the last link between East Grand Forks and Grand Forks.

19 – Red River reaches 52.89 feet.

19 – Water is 4 feet deep in downtown Grand Forks.

19 – Grand Forks water treatment plant fails.

19 – Grand Forks orders evacuation of all areas east of Washington Street.

19 – UND President Ken Baker calls off classes for the rest of the semester, two weeks before finals.

19 – City orders evacuation of all areas east of Columbia Road.

19 – A fire is reported in the Security Building in downtown Grand Forks. The fire eventually damages or destroys 11 buildings throughout three city blocks. Planes are used to drop chemical retardant over the fire in an effort to extinguish the blaze.

20 – Grand Forks Mayor Pat Owens announces a 24-hour curfew in mandatory evacuation zones.

20 – Red River reaches 53.99 feet.

21 – Red River crests at 54.35 feet.

21 – Classes are cancelled for the rest of the year for Grand Forks and East Grand Forks schools.

22 – President Clinton tours devastated areas by helicopter.

23 – Red River begins to recede.

May

19 – Red River falls below flood stage (28 feet) to 27.77 feet.