That winter system that impacted states to the north of us is exiting the region into the Northeast. Behind the cold front moving south through South Florida today, large and strong high pressure will gradually move into the region today through the upcoming holiday weekend. This will give us sunshine for the rest of the week, but northwest winds will also push a very cold and dry airmass into the state that will persist for several days.

Despite abundant sunshine, temperatures will be 10-20 degrees below normal for this time of year. Highs on Wednesday and Thursday will only reach the mid 40s to mid 50s across North Florida, with 50s and 60s expected for Central and South Florida.

Overnight lows will be the big story. Hard freeze conditions with temperatures in the 20s are expected across North Florida Wednesday night, with some locations in Central and South Florida near Lake Okeechobee also reaching very close or just under the freezing mark. Thursday night temperatures will be very similar to Wednesday across North Florida, though the southern half of the state should see a slight warm-up of a few degrees.
As if the cold temperatures weren’t enough, 5-10mph winds overnight will also be capable of producing wind chill values in the teens and low 20s across North Florida, with wind chills as low as the upper 20s and low 30s possible across much of Central and South Florida both Wednesday and Thursday night.

Friday will begin a slight warm up as high pressure moves by to our north, but it will still fee a little chilly with daytime highs in the 50s across North Florida and low 60s to low 70s south of I-4. Saturday will feel better still with temperatures about 5 degrees warmer than Friday. However, the arctic air will still have us in its grip through Saturday night with sub-freezing temperatures once again expected across much of North Florida away from the immediate coast. Much of the Florida Peninsula should remain above freezing, but lows in the 40s and 50s will still feel a bit chilly.

With this cold spell expected to last through the week, Floridians are encouraged to use the 5 P’s of cold weather safety. The 5 P’s are: Protect people, protect plants, protect pets, protect pipes and practice fire safety. Though temperatures may not be quite cold enough to damage pipes, human and animals will be especially susceptible to the cold and you should take extra measure to protect yourself and others.

Be careful when heating your home. Keep space heaters at least 3 feet away from anything flammable and don’t use cooking appliances as heaters.
Another reason why it is so important to practice fire safety is because weather and drought conditions will make the wildfire potential higher this week. The dryness of the air filtering down the state will lower our humidity values which can cause fires to spread quicker. In addition, over three-quarters of the state are still experiencing moderate to severe drought conditions. So in addition to using indoor fire safety, practicing outdoor fire safety is equally important. Water your lawn every few days. It only needs 1 inch per week to stay healthy. Also, clean dead vegetation from gutters and around the yard. If using the grill or a bonfire, make sure it is properly extinguished. Most importantly, have a family fire safety plan.

As we head toward Martin Luther King Day, that will be our next chance for rain as another frontal system develops over the southern Plains and heads east. Right now, rain chances are low from Sunday night into Monday, but should increase on Tuesday of next week. Also, southerly winds ahead of the system will continue the warm-up with temperatures in the 60s and 70s and lows in the 40s-60s.

If you plan on visiting the beach this weekend, make sure you know the forecast. There could be an elevated rip current risk along the Atlantic Coast this weekend, so make sure you check beach warning flags or with beach patrol before entering the water.

For more information and your daily forecast, visit www.FloridaDisaster.org