

Snow joke..plants say freeze on way



SPECTACULAR Snow-capped Muckish Mountain in Co Donegal yesterday

Donegal postie gets it right again after experts rubbished claims

BY EAMON DONOGHUE AND STEPHEN MAGUIRE

WRAP up warm folks - the dreaded first snow of winter is going to hit some parts of the country this week.

Forecasters said temperatures will drop below zero especially at night so make sure your homes are heated up.

The hills of Donegal got the first snowflakes yesterday as predicted by the county's unofficial weatherman-in-chief, postman Michael Gallagher, and contrary to what Met Eireann said.

He finds out the weather from the behaviour of plants and animals and has been predicting it correctly for years.

Michael said: "How did people tell the weather many years ago before satellites and all sorts of fancy gadgets? They turned to nature."

But only last Friday night on the Nine O'Clock news weather girl Evelyn Cusack dismissed claims a big freeze was coming.

She told viewers: "People have been asking if we will have a cold winter and I'm afraid we can't tell you that as forecasting only goes between five and 10 days ahead. But some people ask why

we don't use signs from nature? For example, can animals predict not only the weather but earthquakes?"

"Well, I'm afraid not - there have been studies done."

But Met Eireann yesterday did a U-turn and warned: "The nights will be cold, there will be patchy frost around, depending on cloud cover. But certainly some sharp frosts are possible."

"We had a little snow in the north yesterday but only a light dusting. It was mainly over inland parts of Northern Ireland but a few light showers and flurries did get down to the north midlands here in the Republic."

"But the amounts were very small, hardly amounting to a trace in the ground. The Donegal hills would have got a light covering

of snow.

"But we are certainly finished with any snow or any of that sort of business for the short term

anyway. Over the next 24 hours it will be very windy.

"There'll be a few showers mainly over Ulster but a lot of the country will be dry in the afternoon, although it will feel cold because of the wind."

"The rest of the week will be quite dry and settled."

"Night-time temperatures tonight and tomorrow in inland places could fall as low as maybe minus one or two, with a breeze that will give localised sharp ground frost."

"But roads should be dry and I don't think ice should be any major hazard." The AA warned the public

of the dangers of frozen pipes as the chill sets in and told homeowners "to check their pipes are properly insulated".

In 2010 icy weather resulted in more than 19,000 household insurance claims - amounting to €173.1million - because of burst pipes.

Spokesman Conor Faughnan said: "Frozen pipes in particular can cause very costly damage so it's really important to be prepared."

"The problem is the damage can be wide-ranging, from destroyed couches and carpets to rotting walls."

"Quite often those who call just want someone to take the weight off their shoulders and that's why our Home Rescue service is free with our Home Insurance."

"We'll send out an

approved expert to repair the damage for free when you make a claim."

Frozen water expands and the pressure on the pipe causes cracks.

The real problem for homeowners comes about when the water melts and starts to pour out through the leaking pipe.

If your pipes do burst the advice is to turn off the water supply at the main stop tap and open the tap nearest to the pipe that is frozen so the water can flow through once melted.

Then thaw the ice in the pipe with hot water bottles or a hair-dryer.

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“People told the weather years ago by nature before all the gadgets

NATURE WATCHER Donegal postman Michael Gallagher

MICHAEL GALLAGHER IN DONEGAL YESTERDAY



Obama 'sorry' to Afghans

BARACK Obama is to write to the Afghan people acknowledging mistakes in the "war on terror".

The two countries agreed a security pact and must decide if the US army will remain in Afghanistan after 2014.

The President's letter is to be presented to tribal elders tomorrow.

One dead in mall collapse

ONE worker has died and 50 others were trapped after a mall collapsed in South Africa yesterday.

The half-built shopping centre fell down near the coastal city of Durban.

It's still unclear what caused the incident although it's been reported the second floor of the structure gave way.



23 killed by suicide blasts

AT least 23 people are dead with another 146 injured after two suicide blasts outside the Iranian Embassy in Lebanon.

A radical Sunni group has claimed responsibility on Twitter.

It threatened more unless Iran-backed Hezbollah stops helping Syrian government forces.

Spain angers UK over port

THE Spanish Ambassador has been summoned to the British Foreign Office after a Spanish ship entered the Port of Gibraltar.

Foreign Office Minister David Lidington said it was a "provocative" act.

The vessel's owners claimed it was doing survey work in the interests of the European Community.