

NWS Grand Forks and Community

OFFICE HISTORY: The United States Weather Bureau opened a weather office at the Merchants State Bank in Moorhead Minnesota in 1881. The office then moved to the Dr. PH Lamb Cottage in Moorhead Minnesota in 1904. In 1920, the office moved to the U.S. Post office in Moorhead Minnesota. The office then relocated to Hector Airport in Fargo North Dakota in 1934 and renamed to the National Weather Service in 1970.

In November 1994, the new modernized office building was completed on the west side of Grand Forks and began operations in the new facility and as part of the agency's nationwide modernization effort. In the fall of 1995, WSO Grand Forks became a full-fledged forecast office and was renamed Weather Forecast Office (WFO) eastern North Dakota. The staff totals 24 individuals: nine operational meteorologists, one hydrometeorological technician, three Meteorological Interns, two SCEP students, a three member electronics staff, an Information Technology officer, an Administrative Support Assistant, a Science Officer, a Warning Coordination Meteorologist, a Data Collection Program Manager, and a Meteorologist-in-Charge. The new County Warning and Forecast Area covers 17 counties in North Dakota and 18 counties in Minnesota counties in northwest Minnesota with a population of about 640,000 people.

WFO eastern North Dakota produces weather warnings and advisories, daily forecasts, and digital or gridded forecasts for use by emergency managers, law enforcement, fire departments, land managers, aviation, media, and the public. The WFO staff collects surface and remotely-sensed weather data. All of these data streams are provided to the public via the web at WFO eastern North Dakota (<http://weather.gov/grandforks>), and to the National Centers for Environmental Prediction for use in the national meteorological forecast models.

COMMUNITY DESCRIPTION: The Grand Forks/East Grand Forks area is a place for families to grow and learn together, a place where neighbors are happy to lend each other a hand. Families come together for many unique celebrations like First Night, Art Fest and the Potato Bowl.

The communities offer an environment with the great amenities offered in larger urban areas, and the safety and convenience of a small community. Greater Grand Forks is an impressively cosmopolitan city, boasting a regional population of roughly 75,000 spanning two states.

The Grand Forks/East Grand Forks area has a strong and varied faith community. Nearly 50 faith structures adorn our cities representing more than 16 religions and denominations.

Grand Forks and East Grand Forks are largely residential. Most of the people who work here also live here and the predominant form of housing is single-family homes. Though there are is an abundance of rental properties as well.

Some of the features that make the cities a great place to live are diverse educational opportunities, safety and low crime rate, parks and theaters, and a cost of living considerably lower than that found in large cities.

ENTERTAINMENT: Grand Forks and East Grand Forks have one of the most active arts and cultural scenes in the region. The University of North Dakota’s music department and the Greater Grand Forks Symphony often host local and visiting musicians and offer a variety of musical events. There are choral groups, including a local Children’s Choir and Master Chorale, wind ensembles, and a full symphony orchestra.

The Grand Forks area has a long history of public theater. The Firehall Theater, the Empire Arts Center and UND’s Burtness Theater all host a variety of performances every year. In East Grand Forks, the Community Performing Arts Center offers both school and community performances.

The Alerus Center is home to UND football games in addition to various concert and trade shows. The Ralph Engelstad Arena is home to UND nationally recognized hockey team. World-class performances by musicians and theater groups can be found at the Chester Fritz Auditorium and the North Dakota Museum of Art.

POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHICS: Please refer to the Census Bureau website at <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/>.

CLIMATE: Grand Forks climate, with its four distinct seasons, allows for a pleasant variety and an invigorating lifestyle. A broad range of both summer and winter outdoor recreational choices can be enjoyed by people of all ages.

Average High Temperatures		Average Low Temperatures	
Spring (March-May)	53 F		31 F
Summer (June-August)	80 F		55 F
Autumn (Sept.-November)	53 F		32 F
Winter (Dec.- February)	19 F		1 F

Average annual rainfall 19.6”

Average annual snowfall 44”

Elevation 843 feet msl

RECREATION: The communities enjoy well over 50 parks and recreational facilities, including indoor and outdoor skating rinks in both Grand Forks and East Grand Forks, an indoor playground in Grand Forks, tennis courts and ball fields in both communities. Many of the parks have warming houses, restroom facilities and playground equipment.

One of the newest recreational additions to the communities of Grand Forks and East Grand Forks is the Greenway. Located along the Red and Red Lake rivers, the Greenway encompasses about 2,200 acres of open space offering year-round recreational activities including canoeing/kayaking, fishing and birding. The Greenway offers over 20 miles of asphalt trails connected by two non-motorized bridges. The Greenway also features a new campground located in East Grand Forks.

EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES: One of the main factors contributing to a great quality of life in the Grand Forks-East Grand Forks area is the education system. The two communities offer extensive, high-quality educational opportunities from preschool through advanced degree programs.

Grand Forks and East Grand Forks offer primary and secondary education in different configurations. In East Grand Forks, four schools serve the 12 grades, with one school for grades K-2, another for grades 3-5, a third for 6th through 8th grades and a 9-12 high school. Overall, East Grand Forks Public Schools educate over 2,000 young people each year. In Grand Forks, a total of 12 elementary schools serve grades K-6, while four middle schools serve grades 6-8 and two high schools and one alternative high school serve the 9-12 school population. Including the Grand Forks Air Force Base, these schools serve over 7,600 students.

Parochial education is also available to all denominations. Sacred Heart Catholic Schools is located in East Grand Forks and offers daycare services, along with state-accredited preschool, K-6 and 7-12 college preparatory high school. In Grand Forks, there are two K-6 state-accredited Catholic schools; Holy Family and St. Michael's, plus St. Mary's Project Kids & Tots preschool. In addition, Riverside Christian School in East Grand Forks offers education through grade 8.

Education in the area has long been recognized for its quality. The Grand Forks School district has average daily attendance of 96% and a graduation rate over 93%. Well over half of the teachers in the district hold advanced degrees. Several students from each high school qualify annually as Merit or Presidential Scholar candidates and high school students in Grand Forks average higher ACT scores than the state or national average.

Higher Education in many forms can be found in Grand Forks and East Grand Forks. The University of North Dakota and Northland Community and Technical College are two of the main institutions in the area providing students with growth, learning and the skills to help them discover their vocational and employment possibilities. UND enrolls nearly 13,000 students in 191 fields of study from baccalaureate through doctoral and professional degrees.

TRANSPORTATION: Grand Forks International airport offers air service from Northwest Airlines and Allegiant Airlines (direct flights to Las Vegas and Phoenix). There is both a public bus and taxi system available in Grand Forks. Amtrak offers rail service.

TAXES: The state of North Dakota has a very low state income tax and reasonable property tax in Grand Forks.

COMMERCE: There are approximately 2,500 businesses in the area, employing over 35,000 people. Businesses range from small to very large, many of which were started right here in the community. Large employers that form a regional base include Altru Health System and the University of North Dakota, as well as numerous banking and financial service concerns and agricultural processing plants.

The Grand Forks Industrial Park continues to grow and includes over 30 businesses, ranging from an Amazon.com call center to Cirrus, a manufacturer of light aircraft. In East Grand Forks, agricultural processing is one of the main employment sectors.

The counties containing the cities of Grand Forks and East Grand Forks support over 2,000 farming operations with a value of nearly \$250 million in production in Grand Forks County, North Dakota and Polk County, Minnesota.