

Beat: Lifestyle

Punxsutawney Phil predicts six more weeks of U.S. winter

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USPA News - Punxsutawney Phil, the Pennsylvania groundhog that folklore has it can predict an early spring, emerged from his burrow Sunday and predicted that six more weeks of winter-like weather is in store for the United States. "Punxsutawney Phil, the Seer of Seers, Prognosticator of Prognosticators, was awakened from his burrow at 7:28 a.m. by the cheers of thousands of his faithful followers," his handlers said during the annual event in Punxsutawney, a town about 80 miles (128 kilometers) northeast of Pittsburgh in the Pennsylvania Wilds.

"Phil looked to the sky and gazed around his stump. Then, speaking in Groundhogese, he directed President Deeley to the correct scroll," the handlers added. That scroll announced the bleak forecast: "A Super Bowl winner I will not predict, but my weather forecast you cannot contradict. That's not a football lying beside me. It's my shadow you see. So, six more weeks of winter it shall be!" According to holiday folklore, if the groundhog emerges in the early morning on February 2 and does not see his shadow, there will be an early spring. If he sees his shadow, six more weeks of wintry weather are expected. The annual event that started with a small group of men known as the Inner Circle in 1886 now attracts up to 30,000 visitors to Punxsutawney each year. Since the first event, Punxsutawney Phil has only predicted 17 early springs, although records are missing for 10 years. "What started as a small gathering in 1887 has now evolved into tens of thousands of visitors from around the nation coming to Punxsutawney to participate in this time-honored Groundhog Day tradition. The economic impact of this multi-day event is tremendous," Pennsylvania Governor Tom Corbett said on Sunday. "Regardless of whether Phil predicts an extended winter or early spring, tourists will have plenty of recreational opportunities in Pennsylvania to choose from in the coming weeks." Groundhog Day has become internationally known since the 1993 comedy that starred actor Bill Murray as local weatherman Phil Connors. In the movie, Connors finds himself stuck in a personal time loop that repeats February 2 over and over while he is on a hated assignment to cover Groundhog Day. "It's the same shtick every year. The guy raps on the door, they pull the little rat out, they talk to him, he talks back. Then they tell us what's going to happen," Connors says in the movie, adding later: "This is pitiful. 1,000 people freezing their butts off waiting to worship a rat. What a hype." In December 2006, the Library of U.S. Congress added the 1993 movie to its film preservation list that was established to ensure "culturally, historically or aesthetically" significant movies are preserved forever. There are currently 625 movies on the list.

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