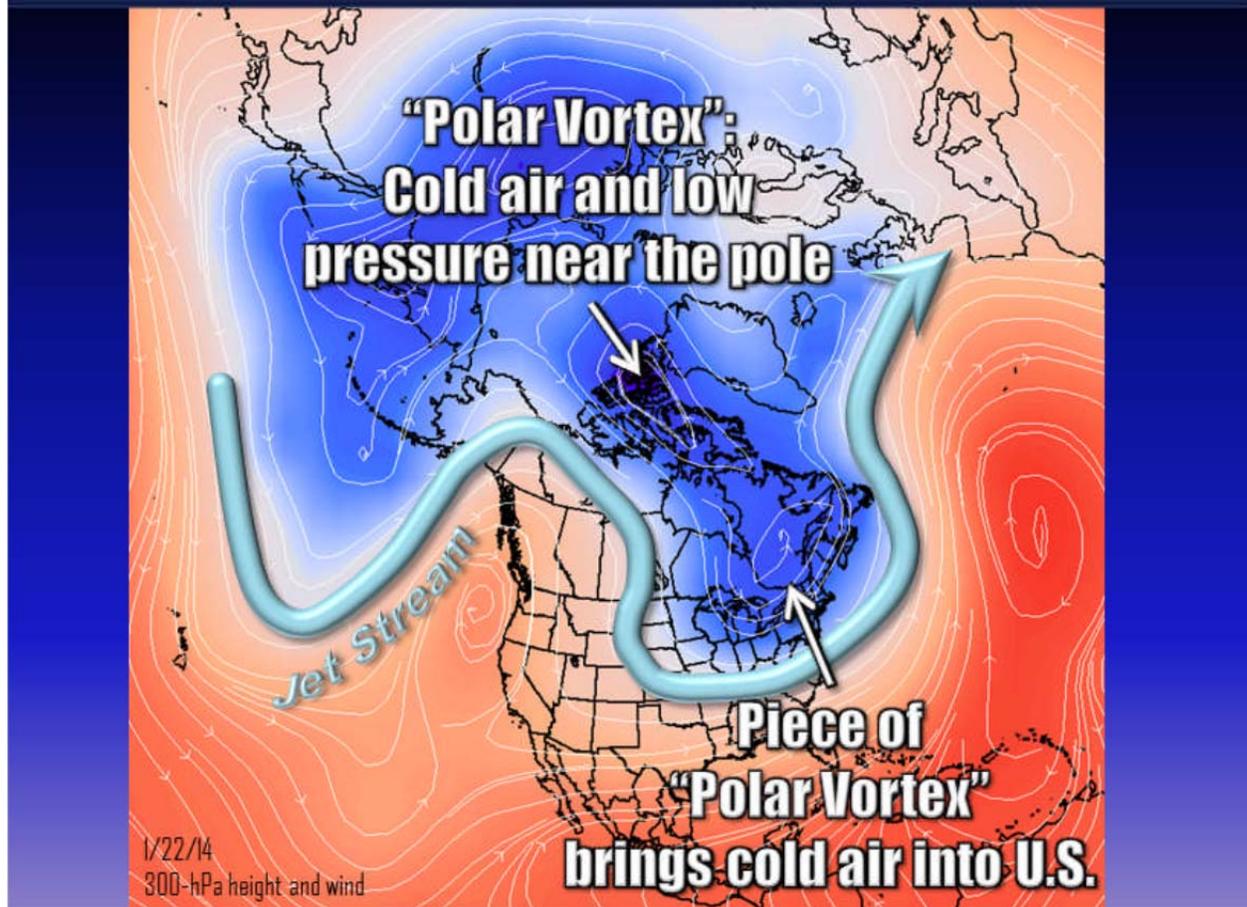


What Is the "Polar Vortex"?



According to the National Weather Service, a polar vortex is a large region of low pressure that continuously sits near the North Pole during the winter. "Vortex" refers to the counter-clockwise flow of air that flows around this area of low pressure. This wind flow is strongest at the edge of the polar vortex and is what meteorologists refer to as the jet stream.

The Kansas City, MI NWS noted, "The strength of this system controls the jet stream which has big effects on the weather. If the polar vortex weakens and breaks into pieces, the jet stream may buckle and allow low pressure and cold air to sink southward into the United States (note the blue sections highlighted on the map). When the jet stream surges northward, warm air and dry weather are the result."