

Deadly Winter Storm Leaves 1 Million in Dark

by abc-News

At least 23 deaths, mostly traffic related, have been blamed on a lumbering winter storm that has moved eastward across the nation, dumping snow and ice and making driving treacherous.

More than 1 million people were without power, according to The Associated Press, from a wintry mix of snow and ice that stretches 1,400 miles across 26 states.

More than 300,000 customers in Arkansas still have no electricity from frozen power lines that snapped overnight. In Kentucky, nearly half a million are still in the cold.

"Out west, we have entire counties [that] are without heat and power," said Kentucky Gov. Steve Beshear.

Poor road conditions are slowing the work of power crews. It could be several days before the power lines are restrung and the lights are on again in the hardest hit areas, officials told ABC News.

"Some of the roads are blocked out in the county," an emergency official in Madison County in Kentucky told ABC News affiliate WKYT. "And even driving around in town is pretty dangerous. It's a war zone."

Charles and Barbara Caswell, ice storm victims from Louisville, moved into a local shelter for the night for heat powered by generators. They had to leave their Jack Russell terrier in their unheated home to comply with the rules.

The winter weather that lingered in Oklahoma and the Plains states earlier this week moved into the Northeast overnight, leaving countless commuters hammered by icy roads.

Cars have slid off roads. Power lines have collapsed under the weight of the ice. In some places, three inches of ice have piled up. Many schools are closed from Maryland to Maine as the storm travels east.

"The primary impacts will be to transportation," National Weather Service meteorologist Art Kraus told "Good Morning America" Wednesday. "Many highways will be impassable or closed, and we could have thousands or even hundreds of thousands of people without power."

In Oklahoma, the storm's destructive march caused more than 900 car accidents. Power lines blocked roadways in Cincinnati, creating dangerous obstacles for drivers.

"People were driving by, seeing it and slamming on their breaks and sliding once they realized there was a line right in the road," said Cincinnati resident Ellen Hoh.

Icy Roads Send Drivers Sliding Freezing temperatures turned snow into ice across the country, sending drivers slipping and sliding along the roads.

"As soon as I merged in, my car flipped 180 degrees," one traveler in the Midwest told ABC News.

Millions of Americans struggled to deal with the storm's ramifications -- slick layers of sleet and snow that coated sidewalks and streets and created a nightmare for cleanup crews.

"The more we plow, the slicker it gets. It just keeps coming!" one Pennsylvania plow driver told ABC News.

Airport crews are racing to keep planes de-iced, but flight delays and cancellations popped up all morning as a result of the weather.

Flights arriving at New York City's area airports faced significant delays, according to data from the Federal Aviation Administration. Flights coming into Newark, N.J., were being delayed almost two hours, and flights coming into LaGuardia Airport in New York City were subject to delays of nearly three hours. Arrivals at Philadelphia reported delays of about 2½ hours. Low visibility farther south in Charlotte, N.C., was also delaying arrivals by about an hour.

The mess is expected to move off the coast later tonight.

The weather system responsible for the dangerous conditions had remained fairly stationary since Monday, dumping freezing rain from Oklahoma and Texas to Missouri, Arkansas and Kentucky.

In parts of Arkansas and Oklahoma, the ice was three inches thick Tuesday night. In Tulsa, Okla., a mixture of sleet and snow covered highways with a layer of solid ice.

This morning, the storm has moved out of Tulsa, leaving behind roads and trees encased in ice, as well as continued power outages and low temperatures of 12 degrees. Schools in Tulsa were closed Wednesday for yet another day.

Though this week's storm is taking a toll, the nation has seen worse. During a winter storm in 2007, ice accumulated to 4 inches and 85 people lost their lives.

ABC News' Sam Champion, Ryan Owens and Eric Horng and The Associated Press contributed to this report.

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