

Blizzard dumping snow in South; DC mayor says 'hunker down'

January 22 2016, by Ben Nuckols And Seth Borenstein



Residents of the Capitol Hill neighborhood in Washington flock to Frager's Hardware, Friday, Jan. 22, 2016, in preparation for the anticipated blizzard heading to the the Eastern U.S. and threatening the District of Columbia with two feet of snow. (AP Photo/J. Scott Applewhite)

Shoppers raided grocery and hardware stores, bishops excused Catholics from Sunday Mass and the nation's capital was shutting down Friday, just ahead of a gnarly blizzard that will blanket much of the Eastern

United States this weekend.

Conditions quickly became treacherous as the first heavy flakes fell from Tennessee through Virginia's Blue Ridge mountains, aiming straight for Washington. Cars got stuck on icy, snow-covered roads and people lost power as far south as Georgia.

The good news, of a sort: Meteorologists appear to have gotten this storm right, as predictions have converged, making it highly probable at this point that the worst of the blizzards will be focused on the Washington area. The National Weather Service said Friday that this could be one of the top three storms in the capital's history.

Snowfall as heavy as 1 to 3 inches an hour could last for 24 hours or more in some areas, said meteorologist Paul Kocin with the National Weather Service. That puts estimates at more than 2 feet for Washington, up to 18 inches for Philadelphia and 10 inches or more in New York City. Even in Atlanta, people headed home early to avoid some light snow.

All the ingredients have come together to create a blizzard with brutally high winds, dangerous inland flooding, white-out conditions and even the possibility of thunder snow, with Washington squarely in the bulls-eye, forecasters said. The winds initially picked up warm water from the Gulf of Mexico, then gained much more moisture from the warmer-than-usual Gulf Stream off the East Coast.



Pennsylvania Avenue looking toward the U.S. Capitol in Washington is virtually empty, early Friday, Jan. 22, 2016, as the Nation's Capital hunkers down in preparation for a major snowstorm expected to begin later in the day. The Federal Government will close all of their offices in the area at noon. (AP Photo/J. David Ake)

Kocin said it recalls "Snowmageddon," the first of two storms that "wiped out" Washington in 2010 and dumped up to 30 inches of snow in places. This storm could have similar snowfall, but the weekend timing and days of warning could help limit deaths and damage. Also, there don't appear to be more storms lined up behind this one.

Washington Mayor Muriel Bowser asked residents to "hunker down" and "shelter in place" until the storm has passed, probably sometime Sunday. The snow was expected to start falling on the capital between 1 p.m. and 3 p.m., a little earlier than previously forecast.

"The forecast does not show any evidence of lightening up," she said, stressing the "life and death implications."



A woman strolls along Campbell Avenue at First Street with her dog as snow falls Friday morning, Jan. 22, 2016, in Roanoke. A blizzard menacing the Eastern United States started dumping snow in Virginia, Tennessee and other parts of the South on Friday as millions of people in the storm's path prepared for icy roads, possible power outages and other treacherous conditions. (Stephanie Klein-Davis/The Roanoke Times via AP)

People awoke to snow and ice Friday as the storm moved eastward.

At sunrise in Memphis, Tennessee, nurse Danielle Aldridge couldn't find her ice scraper, so she used a plastic kitchen cutting board to clear her windshield. She had to get to work at a family practice clinic that was open on Friday, unlike government offices and many other private

businesses.

"Sick people will come in today," she said. "That's part of the deal. Like the post office—rain or shine or sleet or snow, I will take care of my patients."



This image provided by National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) shows a computer model forecasting the chances of a snow storm hitting the East Coast this weekend, Jan. 22-23, 2016. Snow up to two feet, was forecast for areas west and southwest of the Washington, with Washington possibly getting 15 to 20 inches, Philadelphia could see 12 to 18, and New York City and Long Island could see 8 to 10, (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration via AP)

In the mountains of Craigsville, West Virginia, people bought the usual kerosene heaters, propane tanks and gas cans, but also a special item: a rake that helps homeowners get snow off their roofs.

"It's going to be bad, probably," said Missy Keaton, cashier and office secretary at the town's hardware store, called Hardware, That's Us. But

she said many people are prepared after snow from Superstorm Sandy caused numerous roof collapses—at stores, homes and a hardware plant—in nearby Summersville in 2012.

At a supermarket in Baltimore, Sharon Brewington stocked her cart with ready-to-eat snacks, bread, milk and cold cuts. In 2010, she and her daughter were stuck at home with nothing but noodles and water.



A snowplows clears US 220 South of Clearbrook as snow falls early Friday morning, Jan. 22, 2016 in Roanoke, Va.. A blizzard menacing the Eastern United States started dumping snow in Virginia, Tennessee and other parts of the South on Friday as millions of people in the storm's path prepared for icy roads, possible power outages and other treacherous conditions. (Stephanie Klein-Davis/The Roanoke Times via AP)

"I'm not going to make that mistake again," she said.

As food and supplies vanished from store shelves, five states and the District of Columbia declared states of emergency ahead of the slow-moving system. Schools and government offices closed pre-emptively. Thousands of flights were canceled. College basketball games and concerts were postponed.

The snowfall could easily cause more than \$1 billion in damage and paralyze the Eastern third of the nation, weather service director Louis Uccellini said.



Kenny Hamblin, left, and Andrew Watts with the Roanoke Parks and Recreation Department shovel snow on the Martin Luther King bridge on First Street and Salem Avenue as snow falls Friday morning, Jan. 22, 2016, in Roanoke, Va. A blizzard menacing the Eastern United States started dumping snow in Virginia, Tennessee and other parts of the South on Friday as millions of people in the storm's path prepared for icy roads, possible power outages and other treacherous conditions. (Stephanie Klein-Davis/The Roanoke Times via AP)

"It does have the potential to be an extremely dangerous storm that can affect more than 50 million people," Uccellini said at the Weather Prediction Center in College Park, Maryland.

White House spokesman Josh Earnest said President Barack Obama would hunker down at the White House.

The federal government was closing its offices at noon Friday, and the capital's subway system was shutting down from late Friday through Sunday. Many people in the region stayed home from work, and ridership on the rails was down by half, Metro spokesman Dan Stessel said.



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feet of snow. (AP Photo/J. Scott Applewhite)

In Washington, Baltimore, and Delaware, archdioceses reminded people that dangerous travel conditions are a legitimate excuse to avoid showing up for Sunday Mass, and watch a ceremony on television instead.

New York City, along with Long Island, Connecticut and Rhode Island, are forecast to be just inside the storm's sharp northern edge. Boston will probably get off easy this time, forecasters said.

Uccellini said it won't be quite as bad as Superstorm Sandy, but people should expect high winds, a storm surge and inland flooding from Delaware to New York.



Bethany Gallagher, of Baltimore, shops for a snow shovel with her 18-month-old

son, Jack, at the Waverly Ace Hardware store, in Baltimore, Friday, Jan. 22, 2016. The northern mid-Atlantic region, including Baltimore, Washington and Philadelphia, is preparing for a weekend snowstorm that is now forecast to reach blizzard conditions. (AP Photo/Steve Ruark)

Train service could be disrupted by frozen switches, the loss of third-rail electric power or trees falling on wires. About 1,000 track workers will be deployed to keep New York's subway system moving, and 79 trains will have "scraper shoes" to reduce icing on rails, the Metropolitan Transit Authority said.

All major airlines have issued waivers for the weekend, allowing passengers to rebook onto earlier or later flights to avoid the storms. More than 2,400 flights were canceled in the U.S. Friday, and another 2,400 Saturday, according to the flight tracking service FlightAware. The bulk of Friday's cancellations were in Charlotte and Raleigh, North Carolina; Saturday's cancellations center on Philadelphia, Washington, and—to a lesser extent—New York. By Sunday afternoon, airlines hope to be back to full schedule to handle business travelers heading out for the week.

One major event in Washington was still on: the March for Life, an annual anti-abortion rally that's usually one of the largest events on the National Mall. It will be held Friday, the anniversary of the Supreme Court's *Roe v. Wade* decision.



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The U.S. Capitol Police said sledding on Capitol Hill—which only recently became legal after an act of Congress—would be welcome for the first time in decades, as long as conditions are safe.

While some [people](#) and businesses worried about the snow, at least one

industry could see a potential boon: ski resorts. Many got a late start on the season because of record high temperatures in December.

"There is never too much snow on the slopes," said Joe Stevens, spokesman for the West Virginia Ski Areas Association.



Alex Hobe, a resident of the Capitol Hill neighborhood in Washington, heads home from Frager's Hardware, Friday, Jan. 22, 2016, with snow shovels, ice-melt, and a sled in preparation for the anticipated blizzard that's expected to hit the Eastern U.S. and threatening the District of Columbia with two feet of snow. (AP Photo/J. Scott Applewhite)



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Citation: Blizzard dumping snow in South; DC mayor says 'hunker down' (2016, January 22) retrieved 24 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2016-01-blizzard-dumping-south-dc-mayor.html>

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