

## Storm slams into Eastern US with wet snow, strong gales (Update)

January 22 2016, by Jessica Gresko And Seth Borenstein

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Michael Rainey got his face full of snow after tubing down the hill along Broad Street in Bristol, Tennessee on Friday, Jan. 22, 2016. The morning snow added to the snow from the Wednesday snow storm that came through the area. (Earl Neikirk/Bristol Herald Courier via AP)

A storm that arrived postcard-pretty in the nation's capital Friday was morphing into a painful, even paralyzing blizzard with gale-force winds pushing heavy snow and coastal flooding. One in seven Americans could get at least half a foot of snow by Sunday, and Washington could see snowdrifts more than 4 feet high.

The first flakes were lovely, but forecasters warned that much, much more was on its way.

Not that anyone will see the worst of it: Much heavier snow and wind gusting to 50 mph should create blinding whiteout conditions once the storm joins up with a low pressure system off the coast, said Bruce Sullivan, a forecaster at the National Weather Service's Weather Prediction Center in College Park, Maryland.

Two feet or more of snowfall is forecast for Washington and Baltimore, and nearly as much for Philadelphia. New York City's expected total was upped Friday to a foot or more. But Sullivan said "the winds are going to be the real problem; that's when we'll see possible power outages."

The result could create snowdrifts 4 to 5 feet high, so even measuring it for records could be difficult, he said.

By nighttime, wet, heavy snow was falling in the capital, making downed power lines more likely, and yet many people remained on the roads, Washington Mayor Muriel Bowser said. "Find a safe place and stay there," she implored both residents and tourists.



In this image taken with a slow shutter speed, Kristi Marion sleds with her 12-year-old daughter, Ella, at Hanes Park, Friday, Jan. 22, 2016, in Winston-Salem, N.C. 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. (Andrew Dye/The Winston-Salem Journal via AP)

Anyone trying to travel in this mess risks getting stuck for hours, marooned in odd places, or killed, authorities warned. At least seven people died in storm-related crashes before the worst of the storm, including Stacy Sherrill, whose car plummeted off an icy road in Tennessee. Her husband survived after climbing for hours up a 300-foot embankment.

"They're slipping and sliding all over the place," said Kentucky State Police Trooper Lloyd Cochran—as soon as one wreck was cleared, other cars slammed into each other, causing gridlock for hours on interstate

highways.

By late Friday, there were 989 car crashes statewide in Virginia, and authorities had assisted nearly 800 disabled vehicles, said Ken Schrad, spokesman for the Virginia State Police Joint Information Center.

Conditions quickly became treacherous all along the path of the storm. Arkansas and Tennessee got 8 inches; Kentucky got more than a foot, and states across the Deep South grappled with icy, snow-covered roads and power outages. Two tornadoes arrived along with the snow in Mississippi.



An overturn vehicle rests on the shoulder of a snow-covered U.S. 522 near Gainesboro, Va., Friday, Jan. 22, 2016. There no injuries in the accident. 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. (Scott Mason/The Winchester Star via AP)

The storm could easily cause more than \$1 billion in damage, weather service director Louis Uccellini said.

All the ingredients have come together for a massive snowfall: The winds initially picked up warm water from the Gulf of Mexico, and now the storm is taking much more moisture from the warmer-than-usual Gulf Stream as it rotates slowly over mid-Atlantic states, with the District of Columbia in its bulls-eye.

At least meteorologists appear to have gotten this storm right. Predictions converged and millions of people got clear warnings, well in advance. Blizzard warnings stretched to just north of New York City. Boston and other New England cities should get a less windy winter storm, and much less snow.

In all, 82 million Americans will get at least an inch of snow, 47 million more than 6 inches, and 22 million Americans more than a foot, Ryan Maue at WeatherBell Analytics said Friday.



Ben Cichy pulls a sled with his sons Adrian, 18-months-old, and Logan 3, inside as they head for sledding in the snow on Capitol Hill, Friday, Jan. 22, 2016 in Washington. (AP Photo/Alex Brandon)

Fortunately, temperatures will be just above freezing after the storm passes in most places, and there's no second storm lurking behind this one, making for a slow and steady melt and less likelihood of more ice and floods, Peterson said.

As food and supplies vanished from store shelves Friday, states of emergency were declared, lawmakers went home, and schools, government offices and transit systems closed early around the region. Thousands of flights were canceled, sporting events were called off, bands postponed concerts and NASCAR delayed its Hall of Fame induction ceremony.

Broadway's shows were still going on in New York, but as snow fell in Atlanta, people there were urged to stay home all weekend, rather than risk a repeat of the city's 2014 "icepocalypse," when a relatively mild winter storm caused days of commuter chaos.

Travel was already impossible across a wide swath of the Ohio River valley. Nashville, Tennessee, was gridlocked by accidents. Several drivers died on icy roads in North Carolina. In Washington, Baltimore, and Delaware, archdioceses pre-emptively excused Catholics from showing up for Sunday Mass.



A group of friends from Blacksburg's Young Life chapter took to the streets to tryout sliding on lunch trays, sleds and their shoes during a winter storm, Friday Jan. 22, 2016, in Blacksburg, 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. (Matt Gentry/The Roanoke

Times via AP)

Coastal flooding and the loss of beaches from high surf were major worries from Delaware north to Long Island. New Jersey's Republican Gov. Chris Christie canceled presidential campaign events in New Hampshire, which should be spared from the storm. "I'm sorry, NH but I gotta go home—we got snow coming," Christie wrote on Twitter. Christie met with his Cabinet on Friday night and then declared a state of emergency as forecasters predicted up to 2 feet of snow in parts of the state. The governor asked people to be smart and stay off roadways on Saturday.

In Washington, the federal government closed its offices at noon, and all mass transit was shutting down through Sunday. President Barack Obama, hunkering down at the White House, was one of many who stayed home. Republican presidential candidate Carly Fiorina addressed anti-abortion activists at the annual March for Life as the storm closed in.

"I would come here if it were thunderstorming," said Kristlyn Whitlock, 20, who came from Steubenville, Ohio, wearing four layers of pants and five layers of tops to stay warm.

In downtown Baltimore, social worker Sean Augustus stocked up on flashlights and water, but said his city comes together when disasters strike.





Gary Buss uses a snow blower to clear walkways and sidewalks in front of his properties on Main Street during a winter storm, Friday Jan. 22, 2016, in Blacksburg, 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. (Matt Gentry/The Roanoke Times via AP)

"This is when you'll see Baltimore city in a different light," Augustus said. "You'll see neighbors coming together to help each other. That's the side of Baltimore people rarely see."

A similar spirit was evident in Annapolis, where 350 Navy midshipmen signed up to shovel people out.

About 7,600 flights were canceled Friday and Saturday—about 15 percent of the airlines' schedules, according to the flight tracking service FlightAware. They hope to be fully back in business by Sunday afternoon.

One of the unlucky travelers stranded by the storm was Jennifer Bremer of Raleigh, North Carolina. Bremer flew into Chicago on Thursday

morning, carrying only a briefcase, for what she thought would be less than a day of meetings. Her flight home was canceled Thursday night, and then again Friday.



Lara Gastinger cross-country skis along the Downtown Mall as snow falls, Friday, Jan. 22, 2016, in Charlottesville, Va. (Ryan M. Kelly/The Daily Progress via AP)

"I have my computer, my phone and a really good book, but no clothing," Bremer said as she eyed flight boards at O'Hare International Airport. "I have a travel agent right now trying to get creative. I'm waiting on a phone call from her. ... I'm trying to get somewhere near the East Coast where I can drive in tonight or early tomorrow morning."

Thousands of track workers, power company employees, road crew

members, firefighters, police, National Guardsmen and others mobilized to help out over the long weekend.

"For our region, this is good timing," said Jeffrey Knueppel, general manager of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority, which is suspending almost all service around Philadelphia Saturday. "Saturday is the day to stay home and Sunday will give us a chance to really clean things up."



An overturned vehicle lies unattended in the median along Monacan Trail Road south of Charlottesville, Va., as snow falls on Friday, Jan. 22, 2016. (Ryan M. Kelly/The Daily Progress via AP)



Mario Argueta, left, of Hackensack, N.J., and friend Alex Sorto leave Meadowlands Hardware after purchasing a snow blower ahead of the weekend's snowstorm, Friday, Jan. 22, 2016, in Rutherford, N.J. Towns across the state are hunkering down in preparation for a major snowstorm expected to begin later in the day. (AP Photo/Julio Cortez)



A man celebrates making it up a steep, snow-covered hill north of the state Capitol in Nashville, Tenn., on Friday, Jan. 22, 2016. Much of downtown was deserted as state and city government offices were closed for the day. (AP Photo/Erik Schelzig)



Dominick Pisciotta, center, rolls a snow blower while conducting a sale at Meadowlands Hardware ahead of the weekend's snowstorm, Friday, Jan. 22, 2016, in Rutherford, N.J. Towns across the state are hunkering down in preparation for a major snowstorm expected to begin later in the day. (AP Photo/Julio Cortez)



Republican presidential candidate, New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie leaves a campaign stop in New Hampshire's north country, Friday, Jan. 22, 2016, in Littleton, N.H. Christie said he will return to New Jersey from the presidential campaign trail to deal with a potentially dangerous snowstorm that has much of the state under a blizzard warning. (AP Photo/Jim Cole)



Daron Anderson walks down an empty snow-covered street to check on the condition of a relative, Friday, Jan. 22, 2016, in Nashville, Tenn. 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. (AP Photo/Mark Humphrey)





Sonny McManus, of Nashville, Tenn., right, waits in line to reschedule her flight at Miami International Airport, after her flight to Nashville was canceled, Friday, Jan. 22, 2016, in Miami. Airlines have canceled more than 2,700 flights Friday to, from or within the U.S., as a blizzard swings up the East Coast, according to flight tracking service FlightAware. (AP Photo/Lynne Sladky)



Carolina Panthers quarterback Cam Newton, left, walks across a practice field covered in snow and ice, Friday, Jan. 22, 2016, in Charlotte, N.C. The Panthers host the Arizona Cardinals in the NFC championship NFL football game on Sunday. (Jeff Siner/The Charlotte Observer via AP)



Chris Haltom, left, and Mandy Olsen, both from Dallas, remove their beer from a snow-covered tabletop where they were keeping it cold as they spend the afternoon on a rooftop bar, Friday, Jan. 22, 2016, in Nashville, Tenn. 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. (AP Photo/Mark Humphrey)



Students walk on the lawn in front of the Rotunda at the University of Virginia as snow falls, Friday, Jan. 22, 2016, in Charlottesville, Va. (Andrew Shurtleff/The Daily Progress via AP)



A sign is seen partially covered by snow after the March for Life 2016, in front of the U.S. Supreme Court, Friday, Jan. 22, 2016 in Washington. January 22 is the anniversary of 1973 'Roe v. Wade' U.S. Supreme Court decision legalizing abortion. (AP Photo/Alex Brandon)

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