

Huge storms hit northern Europe, leave three dead

January 18 2018, by Jo Biddle



Violent gales struck several European countries on Thursday, including Germany, where trucks were overturned due to wind gusts

Violent gales battered northern Europe and beyond Thursday, snapping air and train links and leaving three people dead, all killed by falling

trees.

The Netherlands bore the brunt of the severe winter storms—the second this month—as bitter winds barrelled off the North Sea to hit the low-lying country with full force.

Amsterdam's Schiphol airport, one of the continent's busiest travel hubs, was forced to briefly cancel all flights as winds gusted up to 140 kilometres (86 miles) an hour in some areas.

"Due to severe weather conditions: all air traffic has been suspended until further notice," Schiphol airport said in a tweet. Departures and arrivals gradually began resuming about two hours later.

But the airport also had to close the entrances to two of its three departure halls when some roof tiles were whipped off the terminal building.

"Fire department staff were there to help and assist, because it was not safe," airport spokeswoman Gedi Schrijzer told AFP, adding there had not been any injuries.

As the [national weather service](#) raised its warning to the highest code red level, a 62-year-old man was killed in the central Dutch town of Olst by a falling branch.



Amsterdam-Schiphol airport. Severe winter gales swept across the Netherlands

on Thursday, forcing Amsterdam airport to cancel all flights.

The accident happened when he got out of his truck to move a branch blocking the road, Dutch police said.

A second Dutchman, also 62, was killed in the eastern Enschede when a tree toppled onto his car, the Dutch news agency ANP said.

In neighbouring Belgium, a woman driver also reportedly died when her car was crushed by a tree as she was travelling through a wood in the Grez-Doiceau area, about 35 kilometres (20 miles) south of Brussels.

The Dutch national railway company, NS, announced that "due to the storm all trains are halted until further notice" apart from a small local service in northern Groningen and southern Limburg.

Thalys, the high-speed train service, suspended services to the Netherlands and Germany until at least 1300 GMT.



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One Thalys train heading to the Netherlands from Brussels was stopped at Antwerp and all the passengers told to disembark and wait for at least two hours, an AFP reporter on board said.

NS said it was grappling with "a large number of breakdowns" which meant even after the storm it could take some time for normal service to be restored.

'Rotterdam unreachable'

The high winds were expected to decrease by later in the afternoon, but Dutch officials had closed to all traffic several more-exposed roads and bridges crossing different dykes.

But by late morning the national traffic service the VID had counted 25 large lorries which had been toppled by the gale-force winds, causing huge traffic jams on six of the country's main roads.



The Dutch national weather service raised its warning to the highest code red level as high winds and gales disrupted travel

Southern Rotterdam, Europe's busiest cargo port, was now "virtually unreachable from the north due to problems" on three of the main

motorways into the city, the VID added.

Several flights were also cancelled in the German airports of western Dusseldorf and southern Munich, while the German rail [service](#) Deutsche Bahn said it was reducing the speed of its high-speed ICE trains between northern Wolfsburg and the capital, Berlin.

Elsewhere in Europe, Tyrol state in western Austria said the Westbahn train line linking Vienna, Linz and Salzburg was closed on Thursday morning because of avalanche risk, national railways company OeBB said.

"We don't want to take any risks," OeBB spokesman Christoph Gasser-Mair said.

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