

Winter storm forecast to dump snow from Florida to Carolinas

January 3 2018, by Russ Bynum



Water squirts from a frozen fountain near downtown in Charlotte, N.C., Tuesday, Jan. 2, 2018. Temperatures plummeted overnight to 2 degrees in the north Georgia mountains, 14 in Atlanta and 26 as far south as New Orleans as the Gulf Coast felt more like Green Bay. (AP Photo/Chuck Burton)

Brutal winter weather that's brought subzero temperatures to parts of the U.S. is threatening to dump snow and ice across parts of the South that rarely see flurries, much less accumulation.

The National Weather Service said a wintry mix of snow and freezing rain was expected Wednesday mainly along the Atlantic seaboard from Florida to North Carolina. It warned that icy roads and low visibility could make driving treacherous across the region.

In Savannah, a coastal city that hasn't seen measurable snowfall since February 2010, up to 2 inches (5 centimeters) of snow and sleet were forecast. As city officials filled dump trucks with sand to spread on major streets, Mayor Eddie DeLoach urged residents to stay home and keep off the roads.

"The streets will be slick," DeLoach told a news conference Tuesday. "We could have some serious issues for folks who aren't used to driving in this kind of weather."

Georgia Gov. Nathan Deal declared a state of emergency through Friday for 28 counties because of the frigid weather.

The weather service said up to an inch (2.5 centimeters) of snow could fall as far south as Tallahassee, Florida. Accumulation of 3 to 5 inches (8 to 13 centimeters) was possible in eastern North Carolina.



Steam rises above the waters of the Mississippi River underneath the Eads Bridge as the temperature hovers around -1 degrees Fahrenheit on Tuesday, Jan. 2, 2018, in St. Louis. Cold temperatures will stay throughout the week. (Laurie Skrivan/St. Louis Post-Dispatch via AP)

In other parts of the U.S., dangerously cold temperatures have been blamed for at least a dozen deaths as well as freezing a water tower in Iowa and halting ferry service in New York.

The National Weather Service issued wind chill advisories and freeze warnings Tuesday covering a vast area from South Texas to Canada and from Montana through New England.

Indianapolis early Tuesday tied a record low of minus 12 degrees Fahrenheit (-24 Celsius) for Jan. 2 set in 1887, leading Indianapolis Public Schools to cancel classes. And the northwest Indiana city of Lafayette got down to minus 19 (-28 Celsius), shattering the previous record of minus 5 (-21 Celsius) for the date, set in 1979, the National

Weather Service said. After residents there began complaining of a hum, Duke Energy said it was caused by extra power surging through utility lines to meet electricity demands.

"The temperatures are certainly extreme, but we've seen colder," said Joseph Nield, a meteorologist in Indianapolis, noting that the all-time low temperature in Indiana was minus 36 (-38 Celsius) in 1994.



A coin operated binocular is covered with snow on Goat Island at Niagara Falls State Park in Niagara Falls, N.Y., Tuesday, Jan. 2, 2018. Almost every year frigid temperatures transform Niagara Falls State Park into an icy winter wonderland when the mist of the falls is blown back, freezing on the landscape. (James Neiss/The Niagara Gazette via AP)

Nevertheless, the cold is nothing to trifle with, forecasters warned.

With Chicago-area wind chills expected between -35 and -20 degrees (-37 and -29 Celsius), forecasters warned of frost bite and hypothermia risks and urged residents to take precautions, including dressing in layers, wearing a hat and gloves, covering exposed skin and bringing pets indoors.

Atlanta hospitals were seeing a surge in emergency room visits for hypothermia and other ailments as temperatures plunge well below freezing. The temperature in Atlanta fell to 13 degrees (-11 Celsius) before dawn on Tuesday.

"We have a group of patients who are coming in off the street who are looking to escape the cold—we have dozens and dozens of those every day," said Dr. Brooks Moore, associate medical director in the emergency department of Grady Health System, which operates Georgia's largest hospital in Atlanta.



A person sits bundled in a winter jacket while looking out over the midtown skyline in Atlanta, Tuesday, Jan. 2, 2018. A prolonged stretch of brutal cold is taking a toll in the South, and temperatures in Atlanta are expected to dive well below freezing every night this week through Saturday night, the National Weather Service said Tuesday. (AP Photo/David Goldman)

Warming shelters were opened across the South as freeze watches and warnings blanketed the region, including hard freeze warnings for much of Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama.

Plunging temperatures in Texas brought rare snow flurries as far south as Austin, and accidents racked up on icy roads across the state. In the central Texas city of Abilene, the local police chief said more than three dozen vehicle crashes were reported in 24 hours.

In New York, transportation officials suspended the Newburgh-Beacon commuter ferry service on Tuesday because of icy conditions on the

Hudson River. Just north, the city of Poughkeepsie saw a record-breaking low of minus 10 degrees (-12 Celsius) on New Year's Day.

In Savannah, where January's average high is 60 degrees (16 Celsius), the temperature hovered at 30 (-1 Celsius) at noon Tuesday, cold enough for icicles to dangle from the ornate wrought-iron fountain in Forsyth Park at the edge of the city's downtown historic district.



Sherlin Galicia, left, Alexander Galicia, center, and Heidi Galicia play on the iced over pond at Overton Park while walking the dog, Tuesday afternoon, Jan. 2, 2018, in Memphis, Tenn. The ice has grown a couple inches thick on the pond after several nights of sub freezing temperatures, which are expected to continue through the week. (Jim Weber/The Commercial Appeal via AP)

"I've never seen icicles in Savannah, period," said Sean Dempsey, a local restaurant manager who wore a hat, gloves and a thick coat to walk his dogs Tuesday. "I'm pretty sure last year at New Year's lots of families

were in the park playing catch, Frisbee football and stuff like that."

But making the most of the South's bitter cold snap, the North Carolina Zoo in Asheboro offered discounted tickets for those willing to brave the cold to see polar bears frolic in their kind of weather, along with Arctic foxes and elk. Nonetheless, African elephants, lions and gorillas were being sheltered out of public view because of the dangerously low temperatures.



Jim Portis with the City of Lincoln, clears snow off the frozen surface of Oak Lake in Lincoln, Neb., Tuesday, Jan. 2, 2018, as part of preparations to open the lake to ice skating. The lake's surface was deemed safe for ice skating after bone-chilling cold gripped much of the central U.S., breaking century-old records, icing over some New Year's celebrations and leading to at least two deaths attributed to exposure to the elements. (AP Photo/Nati Harnik)



The sun sets behind a woman taking a stroll on a frigid evening at Liberty State Park, Tuesday, Jan. 2, 2018, in Jersey City, N.J. The Northern New Jersey region continued to experience deep cold weather to start the new year. (AP Photo/Julio Cortez)



Tony Sampson, who received a blanket from Star of Hope's Love in Action van, tries to warm up by a fire under the Eastex Freeway as temperatures hover in the 30s Tuesday, Jan. 2, 2018, in Houston. Plunging overnight temperatures in Texas brought rare snow flurries as far south as Austin, and accidents racked up on icy roads across the state. (Michael Ciaglo/Houston Chronicle via AP)



In a Thursday, Dec. 21, 2017 photo, morning workers pass a lone poinsettia left to remember Grover Perry, a homeless man who was found dead in a portable toilet on North Seventh Street in downtown St. Louis on Wednesday, Dec. 20. Police say another homeless man found dead inside a trash bin on Monday, Jan. 1, 2018, apparently froze to death as the temperature dropped to negative 6 degrees (-21 Celsius). (Robert Cohen/St. Louis Post-Dispatch via AP)



Water flows over the American Falls as ice forms in this view from the Canadian side in Niagara Falls, Ont., Tuesday, Jan. 2, 2018. Almost every year frigid temperatures transform the falls into an icy winter wonderland when the mist is blown back, freezing on the landscape. (Aaron Lynett/The Canadian Press via AP)



Visitors take photographs at the brink of the Horseshoe Falls in Niagara Falls, Ont., Tuesday, Jan. 2, 2018. Almost every year frigid temperatures transform the falls into an icy winter wonderland when the mist is blown back, freezing on the landscape. (Aaron Lynett/The Canadian Press via AP)

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