

Spain shovels out of snowdrifts left by Storm Filomena

January 11 2021, by Joseph Wilson and Manu Fernandez



A plough clears snow in downtown Madrid, Spain, Sunday, Jan. 10, 2021. A large part of central Spain including the capital of Madrid are slowly clearing snow after the country's worst snowstorm in recent memory. (AP Photo/Manu Fernandez)

Emergency crews in central Spain cleared 500 roads and rescued over

1,500 people stranded in their vehicles, allowing Madrid and other areas on Sunday to slowly shovel out of the country's worst snowstorm in recent memory.

After recording 50 centimeters (20 inches) of snow in the Spanish capital between Friday night and Saturday, Madrid and a large swathe of the country remained impassable Sunday, with roads, [rail lines](#) and air travel disrupted by Storm Filomena. The blizzard has been blamed for four deaths.

Transport Minister José Luis Ábalos said by Sunday crews had cleared two runways at Madrid's Adolfo Suárez Madrid-Barajas International Airport and that departures had restarted. Arrivals would slowly begin again sometime between Sunday evening and Monday, weather permitting.

Trains traversing the capital gradually came back online Sunday afternoon, but Ábalos said the important high-speed line linking Madrid with Barcelona remained out of operation.

More than 150 roads were still impassable Sunday. Authorities said all trips by car should be postponed and tire chains were obligatory for journeys that couldn't be avoided. They said all people trapped in their cars by the snow had been rescued but hundreds of cars needed to be recovered after being abandoned by drivers.



People walk through Oriente square covered with snow in downtown Madrid, Spain, Sunday, Jan. 10, 2021. A large part of central Spain including the capital of Madrid are slowly clearing snow after the country's worst snowstorm in recent memory. (AP Photo/Manu Fernandez)

The biggest snowfall since the 1980s in Madrid, according to Mayor José Luís Martínez-Almeida, produced some unusual scenes with some residents using skies to mush through the snow-covered streets.

Storm Filomena has lost strength as it moved eastward but authorities are still urging people to remain at home to limit the risk of falls on icy streets as a cold front moves in.

"The danger is not over," Interior Minister Fernando Grande-Markaska

said. "A week of extreme cold is coming and that will transform all the snow on the ground to ice, thereby multiplying the risk. The storm is bringing with it a cold wave that could push temperatures down to record levels."

Spain's weather service forecasts temperatures to drop as low as -14 C (6 F) in the eastern province of Albacete by Tuesday.

The sparsely populated province of Teruel remained under red alert for intense snowfall, while large areas of Aragón, Catalonia and Valencia also were under alert with wintry weather. More than 6,000 customers were without power in some villages in Catalonia, regional authorities said.



People walk through Oriente square covered with snow in downtown Madrid, Spain, Sunday, Jan. 10, 2021. A large part of central Spain including the capital of Madrid are slowly clearing snow after the country's worst snowstorm in recent memory. (AP Photo/Manu Fernandez)



A woman child enjoy the snow in downtown Madrid, Spain, Sunday, Jan. 10, 2021. A large part of central Spain including the capital of Madrid are slowly clearing snow after the country's worst snowstorm in recent memory. (AP Photo/Manu Fernandez)



People walk in front of Royal Palace covered with snow in downtown Madrid, Spain, Sunday, Jan. 10, 2021. A large part of central Spain including the capital of Madrid are slowly clearing snow after the country's worst snowstorm in recent memory. (AP Photo/Manu Fernandez)



A general view after a heavy snowfall in downtown Madrid, Spain, Sunday, Jan. 10, 2021. A large part of central Spain including the capital of Madrid are slowly clearing snow after the country's worst snowstorm in recent memory. (AP Photo/Manu Fernandez)



A man snowboards at the Gran Via avenue in downtown Madrid, Spain, Sunday, Jan. 10, 2021. A large part of central Spain including the capital of Madrid are slowly clearing snow after the country's worst snowstorm in recent memory. (AP Photo/Manu Fernandez)



A man skis at Espana square in downtown Madrid, Spain, Sunday, Jan. 10, 2021. A large part of central Spain including the capital of Madrid are slowly clearing snow after the country's worst snowstorm in recent memory. (AP Photo/Manu Fernandez)



A view of Oriente square covered with snow with the Royal Palace in front in downtown Madrid, Spain, Sunday, Jan. 10, 2021. A large part of central Spain including the capital of Madrid are slowly clearing snow after the country's worst snowstorm in recent memory. (AP Photo/Manu Fernandez)



People protect themselves from the cold wind during frozen winter day, in Pamplona, northern Spain, Sunday, Jan. 10, 2021. A snow blizzard has blanketed large parts of Spain, impacting on traffic and all public transport services as the snow kept falling on Saturday. (AP Photo/Alvaro Barrientos)



A general view after a heavy snowfall in downtown Madrid, Spain, Sunday, Jan. 10, 2021. A large part of central Spain including the capital of Madrid are slowly clearing snow after the country's worst snowstorm in recent memory. (AP Photo/Manu Fernandez)



People take part in a protest against the lockdown in place due to coronavirus, after snow fall, in Pamplona, northern Spain, Sunday, Jan. 10, 2021. Emergency crews in central Spain have cleared 500 roads and rescued over 1,500 people stranded in vehicles as the country shovels out of its worst snowstorm in recent memory. (AP Photo/Alvaro Barrientos)



A man jog, after the recent snow fall, in Pamplona, northern Spain, Sunday, Jan. 10, 2021. Emergency crews in central Spain have cleared 500 roads and rescued over 1,500 people stranded in vehicles as the country shovels out of its worst snowstorm in recent memory. (AP Photo/Alvaro Barrientos)



A view of Oriente square covered with snow with the Royal Palace in front in downtown Madrid, Spain, Sunday, Jan. 10, 2021. A large part of central Spain including the capital of Madrid are slowly clearing snow after the country's worst snowstorm in recent memory. (AP Photo/Manu Fernandez)



The old Madrid-Burgos railway is covered by snow in the area of Bustarviejo, outskirts of Madrid, Spain, Sunday, Jan. 10, 2021. Emergency crews in central Spain have cleared hundreds of roads and rescued over 1,500 people stranded in vehicles as the country shovels out of its worst snowstorm in recent memory. Storm Filomena has lost strength as it moved eastward but authorities are still urging people to remain at home to limit the risk of falls on icy streets as a cold front moves in. (AP Photo/Bernat Armangue)



A man walks through the snow as the sunset in Rivas Vaciamadrid, Spain, Sunday, Jan. 10, 2021. A large part of central Spain including the capital of Madrid are slowly clearing snow after the country's worst snowstorm in recent memory. (AP Photo/Manu Fernandez)



People walk along a street with snow and fallen tree branches during after a heavy snowfall in downtown Madrid, Spain, Sunday, Jan. 10, 2021. A large part of central Spain including the capital of Madrid are slowly clearing snow after the country's worst snowstorm in recent memory. (AP Photo/Manu Fernandez)

Army emergency brigades focused Sunday on clearing access to Madrid's main fresh food distribution center and to hospitals, as Spain also grappled with its coronavirus crisis, with infections on the rise following the Christmas holidays.

Grande-Marlaska said the government will take extra steps to ensure that the country's weekly shipment of the Pfizer-BioNTech coronavirus vaccine on Monday can be distributed to regional health authorities via police-escorted convoys.

If Madrid's airport is not ready in time, Grande-Marlaska said that a smaller airport in northern Spain could be an alternative to receive the shipment.

"We are maintaining a permanent conversation to protect the transportation to Spain and correct warehousing and the subsequent distribution of the allotment of the vaccine that we will receive tomorrow," Grande-Marlaska said.

Spain has seen more than 51,800 confirmed virus deaths in the pandemic.

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