

Snow and bitter cold bring chaos to Germany and Britain

February 9 2021, by Femke Colborne With Afp Bureaus



Transport Minister Andreas Scheuer has asked residents to avoid getting in their vehicles until Wednesday at the earliest

Freezing drivers were stranded for hours in traffic jams in Germany and COVID-19 vaccination centres were shut in Britain on Tuesday as Europe was pummelled by the heaviest snow in years.

Some parts of Germany were cloaked in up to 50 centimetres (20 inches) of snow by Tuesday afternoon, according to local media reports.

Traffic on a motorway near the city of Bielefeld was brought to a standstill overnight Monday into Tuesday, with some drivers trapped for at least 16 hours.

The bottleneck, caused by lorries stuck in the snow, stretched over 37 kilometres (23 miles), local police said.

Video footage showed shivering drivers huddled in their vehicles, complaining of going for hours without food as temperatures plunged to minus 12 degrees Celsius (10 degrees Fahrenheit).

Severe jams were also reported in Hesse state, where some drivers were stuck in their cars for 15 hours, according to police.

Transport Minister Andreas Scheuer asked residents to avoid setting out on journeys until Wednesday at the earliest.

In such extreme conditions, even the best railway switch heaters and snow clearing vehicles "can reach their limits", he told the Funke media group.

Blizzard-like conditions

Northern and eastern Germany were particularly badly hit on Sunday and Monday night, with blizzard-like conditions and some of the coldest temperatures seen in years.

Police in Saxony-Anhalt state said a man had probably frozen to death after he was found buried in snow next to his tractor.

In Bielefeld, a man was found dead on a snow-covered road on Monday, though emergency services said initial findings suggested he had suffered a medical emergency.



Snowfall is expected to decrease in the coming days

A nursery school bus slid off the road in Rhineland-Palatinate state, collided with a parked car and crashed into the wall of a house, but police said no one was injured.

The southern city of Nuremberg declared a state of emergency after a fire in a power station left homes, businesses, schools, care homes and a hospital with limited access to heating.

Across the country, aid organisations have ramped up efforts to provide homeless people with hot food and drinks, clothing, bedding and toiletries.

Rail disruptions

Train services across Germany have seen severe delays and cancellations because of the winter weather, with snow and ice clogging the rails.

Snow is expected to decrease in the coming days, according to forecasters, but temperatures as cold as -20 C mean travel conditions will remain hazardous.

With the wind-chill factor, temperatures could feel as low as -30 C at night, forecasters have said.

Heavy snow has also fallen in other countries across central and northern Europe, including Belgium, the Netherlands and Denmark.

Parts of England, Scotland and Northern Ireland were placed on amber alert on Tuesday, with major disruptions expected to road and rail travel, according to the Met Office weather service.

Heavy snow on Tuesday morning drew many families to London's parks for sledging, while parts of northern and eastern England were expecting up to 15 centimetres.

Some coronavirus vaccination centres in England were forced to close—including major hubs in Ipswich and Colchester—hampering Britain's rollout.

Schools, currently open only to vulnerable children or those of essential workers, were also closed in southeastern England and Lincolnshire in

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