

Fierce winter storm in US seen tapering off

February 19 2021, by Peter Hutchison With Francois Picard In Houston



A man uses a snow blower during a winter storm in New York on February 18, 2021

A fierce and deadly winter storm that wreaked havoc in the southern and central US and blanketed the East Coast in snow was forecast Friday to start tapering off.

After days of bone-chilling cold that left millions without power and caused [water pipes](#) to burst in oil-rich Texas, temperatures were forecast to be well above freezing on Friday in much of the Lone Star state and rise into the 50s Fahrenheit (10 to 15 Celsius) into the weekend.

Lingering snow showers will continue in the Northeast US and New England, the National Weather Service said. But the worst of the extreme weather system appears to be over.

"A much quieter weather pattern is in store for the CONUS over the next few days," the NWS said, referring to the continental United States.

On Thursday, the storm slammed an area stretching from Virginia up to the Northeast, bringing icy buildups and treacherous travel conditions.

Snow fell steadily across New York City throughout the day, forcing the cancelation of about 200 flights and delaying the opening of two COVID-19 vaccination sites after the storm disrupted dosage delivery.

The Big Apple has already been blanketed by snow twice this winter during two separate storms.



The Capitol is seen on a cold winter evening in Washington, DC, on February 18, 2021

"The occasional snowstorm is always good but as we're getting closer to March it gets a little tiring. I'm ready for it to start being warm again," said 18-year-old student Kara Dickson.

Across Texas, which has been hardest hit by the cold snap, utility companies were gradually restoring power.

But even as relief came into sight for many, nearly 190,000 homes and businesses remained without electricity as of early Friday, according to [PowerOutage.us](https://www.poweroutage.us/).

And as the lights came back on, some Texas residents were dealing with the misery of water pipes that had burst in the frigid temperatures.

"It was like a waterfall was coming down and it was starting to come out of the bathroom and to the other rooms," said Birgit Kamps of Houston.

"We grabbed buckets and towels, tried to mop it up before it started flooding the house," she said, adding that a neighbor helped switch off the water at the break, leaving her without running water.

Water pressure problems meant nearly seven million Texans were being advised to boil their water before drinking it or using for cooking, said Toby Baker, who heads the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, adding that nearly 264,000 people were impacted by non-operational water systems.



After causing days of misery in the south, the storm is now affecting the US east

coast, including Washington

'Failed state'

Texas power companies implemented rolling blackouts to avoid grids being overloaded as residents cranked up the heat. The surge in demand came as generating capacity dropped thanks to power stations and wind turbines freezing.

Texas authorities opened about 300 emergency "warming centers" across the state.

President Joe Biden spoke Thursday evening with Texas Governor Greg Abbott, pledging that the federal government would work "hand-in-hand" with state authorities to offer relief, the White House said.

Texas's woes have sparked outrage in the Lone Star State, the only one of the US's 48 continental states to have its own independent power grid.

Anger soared Thursday after it was revealed Texas Senator Ted Cruz had flown to the Mexican holiday resort of Cancun during the crisis.

As political rivals called for his resignation, Cruz justified the flight by saying his one-night stay was to drop his children off before he flew home.



The snow has given New York a different look, but some residents say they are getting fed up with the cold



Water and power has been knocked out across Texas, with residents told to boil water before drinking it

He later called the trip "obviously a mistake."

Biden ordered the Federal Emergency Management Agency to coordinate disaster relief efforts in Oklahoma and Louisiana after local officials declared emergencies.

Biden was forced to postpone until Friday a visit to the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine manufacturing site in Kalamazoo, Michigan while [federal government](#) offices in Washington were closed Thursday.

More than 40 storm-related deaths have been reported by US media since the cold weather arrived last week, many in traffic accidents.

Animal deaths

Houston police said a woman and a girl died from carbon monoxide poisoning after sitting in a car in a garage with the engine running to keep warm.

Emergency medical authorities around Texas said dozens of others have been treated for suspected [carbon monoxide poisoning](#).

A dozen animals—including one 58-year-old female chimpanzee—died during the freeze at rescue sanctuary Primarily Primates near San Antonio, the organization said on its website.

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