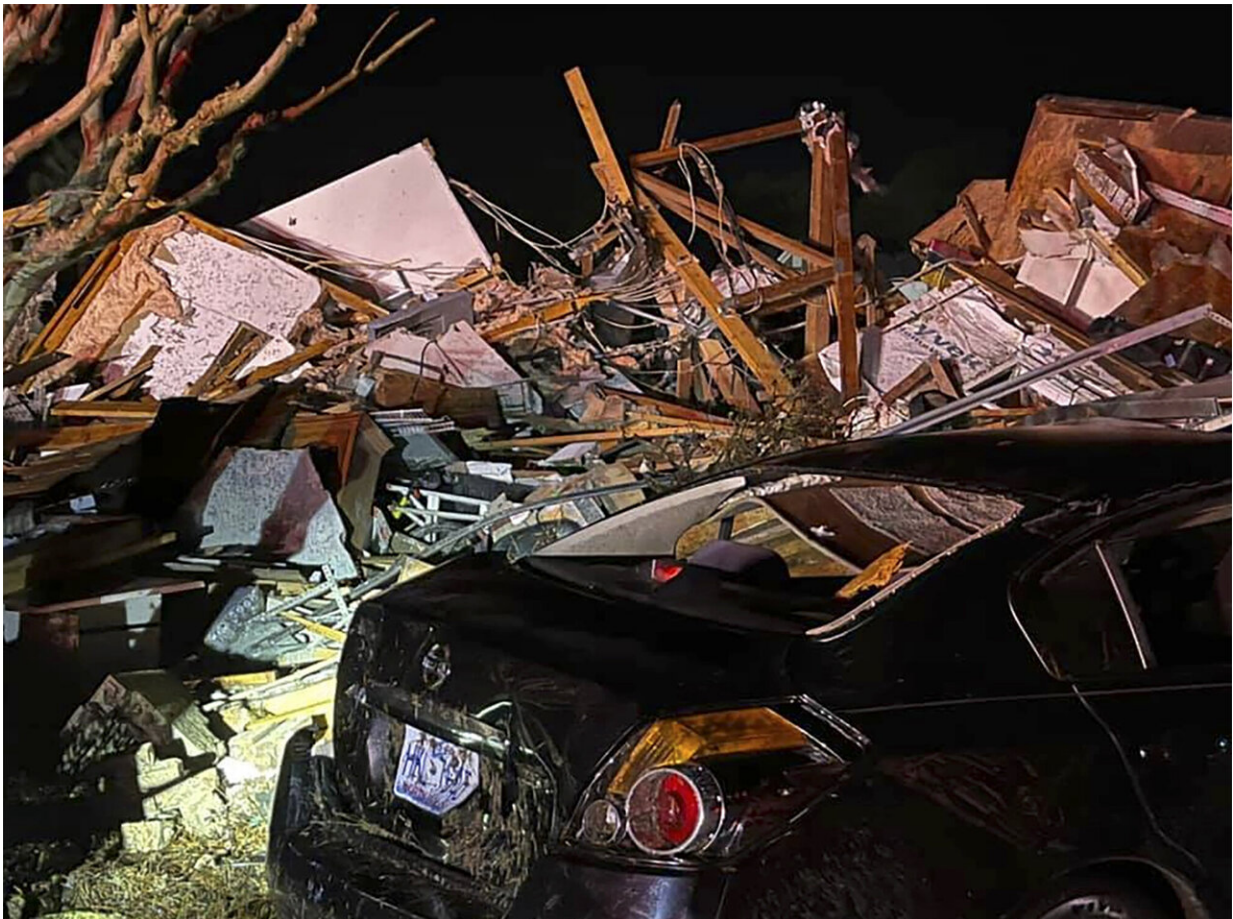


# Winter's wrath: bitter cold, no power and a deadly tornado

February 16 2021, by Bryan Anderson

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A damaged vehicle sits among debris after a deadly tornado tore through Brunswick County, N.C., Tuesday, Feb. 16, 2021. North Carolina authorities say multiple people are dead and others were injured after a tornado ripped through Brunswick County, leaving a trail of heavy destruction. (Emily Flax/Brunswick County Sheriff's Office via AP)

At least three people were found dead early Tuesday after a tornado tore through a seaside town in North Carolina at the rough edge of a winter storm that left millions without power in subfreezing temperatures and made travel treacherous in many states.

The storm that overwhelmed power grids and immobilized the Southern Plains carried heavy snow and freezing rain into New England and the Deep South and left behind record-setting cold temperatures. Wind-chill warnings extended from Canada into Mexico.

In Chicago, a foot and a half (46 centimeters) of new snow forced public schools to cancel in-person classes for Tuesday. Hours earlier, along the normally balmy Gulf of Mexico, cross-country skier Sam Fagg hit fresh powder on the beach in Galveston, Texas.

The worst U.S. power outages were in Texas, affecting more than 4 million homes and businesses. More than 250,000 people also lost power across parts of Appalachia, and another quarter of a million were still without electricity following an ice storm in northwest Oregon, according to [poweroutage.us](http://poweroutage.us), which tracks utility outage reports. Four million people lost power in Mexico.

Texas officials requested 60 generators from the Federal Emergency Management Agency and planned to prioritize hospitals and nursing homes. The state opened 35 shelters to more than 1,000 occupants, the agency said.



A man surveys the damage after a deadly tornado tore through Brunswick County, N.C., Tuesday, Feb. 16, 2021. North Carolina authorities say multiple people are dead and others were injured after a tornado ripped through Brunswick County, leaving a trail of heavy destruction. (Emily Flax/Brunswick County Sheriff's Office via AP)

More than 500 people sought comfort at one shelter in Houston. Mayor Sylvester Turner said other warming centers had to be shut down because they lost power.

Utilities from Minnesota to Texas implemented rolling blackouts as cold temperatures strained power grids.



Blackouts of more than an hour began around dawn Tuesday for Oklahoma City and more than a dozen other communities. The blackouts stopped electric-powered space heaters, furnaces and lights just as temperatures hovered around minus 8 degrees, some of the lowest readings in a more than week of below-freezing conditions.

Nebraska's blackouts came amid some of the coldest weather on record: In Omaha, the temperature bottomed out at 23 degrees below zero overnight, the coldest in 25 years.

Rolling outages also affected some northern Iowa counties, where overnight lows dipped to nearly 30 below around Sioux City and wind chills to around 40 below in some places. Blackouts of up to 30 minutes also were planned for Tuesday morning in the northwestern Minnesota city of Moorhead.



A camera flash illuminates snow near icicles Monday, Feb. 15 at the Rum Village Nature Center in South Bend, Ind.. (Michael Caterina/South Bend Tribune via AP)

The Southwest Power Pool, a group of utilities covering 14 states, imposed rolling two-hour blackouts to ease the extreme demand for heat and electricity, saying they were "a last resort to preserve the reliability of the electric system as a whole."

The outages forced a Texas county to scramble to get more than 8,000 doses of Moderna's coronavirus vaccine into arms after a public health facility lost power early Monday and its backup generator also failed, said Rafael Lemaitre, a spokesman for Harris County Judge Lina Hidalgo.

County officials distributed the doses at three hospitals, Rice University and the county jail because those places had large groups of people in places where they would not have to drive and with appropriate medical personnel on hand.

"It feels amazing. I'm very grateful," said Harry Golen, a 19-year-old sophomore who waited for nearly four hours with his friends, much of it in the cold. He was among the last people to get the shots, which otherwise would not have reached students until March or April.





Colin McDonald along with his daughter Greta pull Louise Boon, 7, Annie Boon, 5, and McDonald's son Townsend, 4, on a kayak in Austin on Monday, Feb. 15, 2021. After a heavy night of snow, the National Weather Service has received reports from around Central Texas of snowfall totals as high as half a foot. (Bronte Wittpenn/Austin American-Statesman via AP)

More than 400,000 additional doses due in Texas now will not arrive until at least Wednesday because of the weather, officials said.

In North Carolina, the National Weather Service's office in Wilmington dispatched a team to confirm that a tornado did indeed touch down and to survey damage in Brunswick County, said Mark Willis, the office's meteorologist in charge.

Three people died and at least 10 were injured when the apparent tornado tore through a golf course community and another rural area just before midnight Monday, destroying dozens of homes. Gov. Roy Cooper said rescue operations were continuing Tuesday.

"The sky lit up and there was a lot of pop-pop-popping. And the loud thunder. And then it sounded like a train, a freight train coming through. ... That's when all the damage occurred," said Sharon Benson, 63. She said her roof was damaged and her garage door blown off. Windows were shattered and nearby trees were uprooted.



Dan Bryant and his wife Anna huddle by the fire with sons Benny, 3, and Sam, 12 weeks, along with their dog Joey, also wearing two doggie sweaters, with power out and temperatures dropping inside their home after a winter storm brought snow and freezing temperatures to North Texas on Monday, Feb. 15,

2021, in Garland, Texas. More than 2 million Texans were without power after the winter storm prompted outages. (Smiley N. Pool/The Dallas Morning News via AP)

Authorities in multiple states reported deaths in crashes on icy roads , including two people whose vehicle slid off a road and overturned in a waterway in Kentucky on Sunday, state police said.

Deaths in Texas included a woman and a girl who died from suspected carbon monoxide poisoning in Houston, at a home without electricity from a car running in an attached garage, police said. Law enforcement also said subfreezing temperatures were likely to blame for the deaths of two men found along Houston-area roadways.

In west Tennessee, a 10-year-old boy died after falling into an ice-covered pond on Sunday during a winter storm, fire officials said.

Several cities had record lows: In Minnesota, the Hibbing/Chisholm weather station registered minus 38 degrees Fahrenheit (minus 39 degrees Celsius). Sioux Falls, South Dakota, dropped to minus 26 Fahrenheit (minus 26 degrees Celsius).





A pedestrian crosses Market Street during a snow storm in downtown St. Louis on Monday, Feb. 15, 2021. The brutally cold weather is expected to continue through Saturday with more snow in the forecast for Wednesday and Thursday. (David Carson/St. Louis Post-Dispatch via AP)



A truck drives past a highway sign Monday, Feb. 15, 2021, in Houston. A frigid blast of winter weather across the U.S. plunged Texas into an unusually icy emergency Monday that knocked out power to more than 2 million people and shut down grocery stores and dangerously snowy roads. (AP Photo/David J. Phillip)



From left, George Shimko III, Devan Shimko, Hunter Shimko, and their father George Shimko Jr., shovel out a parking spot in Frackville, Pa., on Monday, Feb. 15, 2021. (Jacqueline Dormer/Republican-Herald via AP)





Peyton McKinney uses a laundry basket for a sled Monday, Feb. 15, 2021, in Nolensville, Tenn. Much of Tennessee was hit with a winter storm that brought freezing rain, snow, sleet and freezing temperatures. (AP Photo/Mark Humphrey)



Ice and snow blanket parts of a Grandview Avenue and Charles Walker Road, Monday, Feb. 15, 2021 in Odessa, Texas. A sprawling blast of winter weather across the U.S. plunged Texas into an unusually snowy emergency Monday that knocked out power for more than 2 million people, shut down grocery stores and air travel and closed schools ahead of frigid days still to come. (Jacob Ford/Odessa American via AP)





Icicles form on a citrus tree from a sprinkler system used to protect the trees from the freezing temperatures on Monday, Feb. 15, 2021 in Edinburg, Texas. A sprawling blast of winter weather across the U.S. plunged Texas into an unusually snowy emergency Monday that knocked out power for more than 2 million people, shut down grocery stores and air travel and closed schools ahead of frigid days still to come.(Delcia Lopez/The Monitor via AP)





Same Reals, left, and Tyler Panko run shirtless through Wichita, Kan., Monday, Feb. 15, 2021. Reals said he tries to run a 5k on the coldest day of the year. The temperature during their run was -3, with a wind chill of -11. Frigid temperatures continue to grip with the middle of the continent. (Travis Heying/The Wichita Eagle via AP)



Mitra Bumphis, District Manager of KFC on West Main Street, cleans the base of his windshield to keep his wiper blades from freezing to the glass as he lets his car warm up at the West Main Street KFC early Monday morning in Tupelo. (Adam Robison/The Northeast Mississippi Daily Journal via AP)



Eithan Colindres wears a winter coat inside after the apartment his family lives in the Greenspoint area that lost power following an overnight snowfall Monday, Feb. 15, 2021 in Houston. Temperatures plunged into the teens Monday with light snow and freezing rain. (Brett Coomer/Houston Chronicle via AP)





Snow and ice coat tree branches Monday, Feb. 15, 2021, at Tiscornia Park in St. Joseph, Mich. (Don Campbell/The Herald-Palladium via AP)

Air travel was also affected. By midmorning Monday, 3,000 flights had been canceled across the country, more than half of them in Texas. At the main airport for Dallas and Fort Worth, the temperature was 4 degrees Fahrenheit (-15 degrees Celsius), colder than Moscow.

Most government offices and schools were closed for Presidents Day, and authorities pleaded with residents to stay home Tuesday as well. About 100 school systems closed, delayed opening or switched to remote classes on Tuesday in Alabama, where forecasters said conditions might not improve in some places until temperatures rise above freezing Wednesday afternoon.

Louisiana state police reported investigating nearly 75 weather-related crashes caused by a mixture of snow, sleet and freezing rain in the past 24 hours.

Northern Louisiana was in the bullseye for the highest amounts of freezing rain from the incoming system, forecasters said Tuesday, and more than a foot (30 centimeters) of snow was possible in Arkansas, according to the federal Weather Prediction Center.

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