

US snowstorm strands drivers for 20 hours and counting

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Trucks plow snow during a winter storm over the capital region on January 3, 2022 in Washington.

The snow storm is over but the travel misery is not: drivers on a major highway outside Washington reported Tuesday they have been stuck in

their cars in freezing weather for 20 hours or more.

As families try to return home from the long New year weekend, I-95 in Virginia remains dangerously icy, [gas tanks](#) are starting to run low and there is no help in sight, drivers said.

Aerial footage showed seemingly endless lines of cars and trucks, bumper to bumper, that were stranded overnight—on a stretch of highway that is notorious for traffic jams even in good weather.

One of the frustrated travelers was a US senator from Virginia, Tim Kaine, who got marooned driving in his state back to Washington as Interstate 95 clogged with snow and spun-out cars, and eventually shut down because of Monday's monster snowfall.

"I started my normal 2 hour drive to DC at 1pm yesterday. 19 hours later, I'm still not near the Capitol," Kaine tweeted Tuesday morning.

Jim DeFede, a Florida-based journalist with CBS, tweeted that he has been stranded for more than 20 hours. "I'm not sure but I think I now qualify for Virginia residency," he wrote.

In a separate livefeed DeFede described the highway as an icy parking lot where nothing is moving, and said he has not seen a highway patrol car or tow truck in 12 hours or more. The temperature outside as he spoke was 19 degrees (minus 7 Celsius).

DeFede said he runs his engine for an hour or so to keep warm, then turns it off, then repeats this as the wait drags on. "I've got a little over a half a tank of gas left and I have no idea when anyone is coming to get us out of here," he said.

Monday's storm packed an unexpectedly fierce punch and appeared to

have caught much of the capital region off guard, temporarily stranding US President Joe Biden on Air Force One and dumping up to nine inches (23 centimeters) of snow on Washington—and more in parts of Virginia.

It further snarled transport hit by flight cancellations due to bad weather and airline staffing woes caused by a record surge in Covid cases.

An Instagram user with the handle kyleoland said their family of four with two small children slept in their car, ran out of water and walked three miles (five kilometers) in the dead of night to the home of a good samaritan.

"The last 24 hours have been the longest of our lives," the post said.

Virginia's department of transportation said it has never seen such a mess on I-95, although it gave no estimate of how many drivers were affected.

"We know many travelers have been stuck on Interstate 95 in our region for extraordinary periods of time over the past 24 hours, in some cases since Monday morning," department engineer Marcie Parker said.

"This is unprecedented, and we continue to steadily move stopped trucks to make progress toward restoring lanes."

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