

Holiday flights scrapped as massive winter storm sweeps US

December 22 2022, by Kamil Krzaczynski, with Issam Ahmed in Washington



US forecasters warned of life-threatening weather as a "once-in-a-generation" winter storm threatened to wreak havoc on holiday travel plans for millions of Americans, like those at Chicago's O'Hare airport.

More than 1,800 flights were canceled across the United States by Thursday morning as a massive winter storm upended holiday travel plans with a triple threat of heavy snow, howling winds and bitter cold.

At least five US states—Kentucky, Missouri, Oklahoma, Georgia and North Carolina—have already implemented emergency plans and others were likely to follow, with the worst of the Arctic blast yet to come.

"This is not like a snow day when you were a kid," President Joe Biden told reporters at a White House briefing on the weather and transport turmoil.

"This is serious stuff," he added, urging people to heed warnings from [local authorities](#).

Blinding whiteouts and hazardous road conditions were already being seen in parts of the country slammed by a dangerous cold front.

Beyond the 1,825 cancelations as of 1750 GMT, more than 3,700 other flights within, into or out of the United States have been delayed, according to flight tracker FlightAware.

The majority of US flights called off have so far been at Chicago O'Hare or Denver, both international hubs, the data showed.

AccuWeather forecasters have said the storm could rapidly strengthen into what is known as a "bomb cyclone" through a process known as "bombogenesis," when the barometric pressure drops and a cold air mass collides with a warm air mass.

National Weather Service (NWS) forecaster Michael Charnick tweeted a video showing drivers struggling along a highway between Colorado and Wyoming, where the temperature with wind chills plummeted to -40

degrees Fahrenheit (-40C).

The NWS released key safety messages on its Twitter account, warning snow squalls—bursts of moderate to [heavy snow](#) lasting an hour or two—had already happened or were expected from the Central Plains to the mid-Atlantic and Northeast.

"People exposed to extreme cold are susceptible to frostbite in a matter of minutes," the agency cautioned.

"Areas most prone to frostbite are uncovered skin and the extremities, such as hands and feet. Hypothermia is another threat during [extreme cold](#)."



President Joe Biden speaks during a White House briefing on the winter storm system traversing the United States.

'NO TRAVEL advised'

In the Midwest, blizzard conditions stranded 100 motorists in Rapid City and Wall in South Dakota, the Pennington County Sheriff's Office tweeted.

"NO TRAVEL advised," the sheriff's office added.

In Minneapolis and Saint Paul, more than eight inches (20.3 centimeters) of snow accumulated over a 24-hour period, the NWS said in a Thursday morning update.

Farther east in Buffalo, New York, forecasters called it a "once-in-a-generation storm" with wind gusts of more than 65 miles per hour (105 kilometers per hour), wind chills as low as 10 to 20 degrees F below zero, and [power outages](#).

Across the border, eastern Canada was bracing for similarly blustery conditions, with heavy snowfall and rapidly falling temperatures.

The country's busiest airport in Toronto was already feeling the crunch from the weather chaos, with delays and cancellations mounting.

The storm comes as the Transportation Security Administration said it expects holiday travel volume to be close to pre-pandemic levels, with the busiest day on Thursday, three days before Christmas.

American Airlines, Southwest Airlines and United Airlines has already

taken steps to issue weather waivers to allow passengers to change their flights without fees.

The American Automobile Association estimated that more than 112 million people will travel 50 miles or more from home between Friday and January 2, the vast majority of them—102 million—by car.

© 2022 AFP

Citation: Holiday flights scrapped as massive winter storm sweeps US (2022, December 22) retrieved 25 April 2024 from

<https://phys.org/news/2022-12-holiday-flights-scrapped-massive-winter.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.