

'Intense' US blizzard blows Iowa caucus campaigning off course

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Florida Governor and 2024 Republican presidential hopeful Ron DeSantis (C) is guided to his vehicle by staff as he departs a campaign stop in Ankeny, Iowa, on January 12, 2024.

Plunging temperatures, whipping wind and buckets of snow derailed the final stretch of caucus campaigning in the US state of Iowa Friday as

Republican presidential hopefuls delivered their last pitches to voters.

Forecasters warned of "fairly intense blizzard conditions" throughout much of the Midwestern state, as the National Weather Service (NWS) said gusts of 50 to 55 miles (80 to 89 kilometers) per hour, paired with blowing snow, could reduce visibility down to a quarter of a mile.

The [extreme weather](#) was making life difficult for White House hopefuls Ron DeSantis and Nikki Haley, who both canceled events just days before Monday's caucus in Iowa—the first vote of the 2024 White House race.

"We want everyone to be safe," DeSantis told reporters in the state capital Des Moines.

The wind was howling very strongly in the city, where the temperature had fallen to 7 degrees Fahrenheit (-14 Celsius).

The storm will be followed by an "Arctic outbreak" of "bitter cold," according to the NWS, which warned of "dangerously cold wind chill" falling as low as -45 degrees Fahrenheit (-43 Celsius) in Iowa and across the region over the weekend.

Another two or more inches of snow was also predicted for the state, for a total of up to 10 inches in some areas, creating whiteout conditions.



The new snow storm in Iowa comes atop a previous wave of winter weather earlier in the week.

Dozens of cars and trucks were seen overturned in Des Moines, and the Iowa State Patrol said on [social media](#) they had performed 436 "motorist assists" Friday before 10:00 pm.

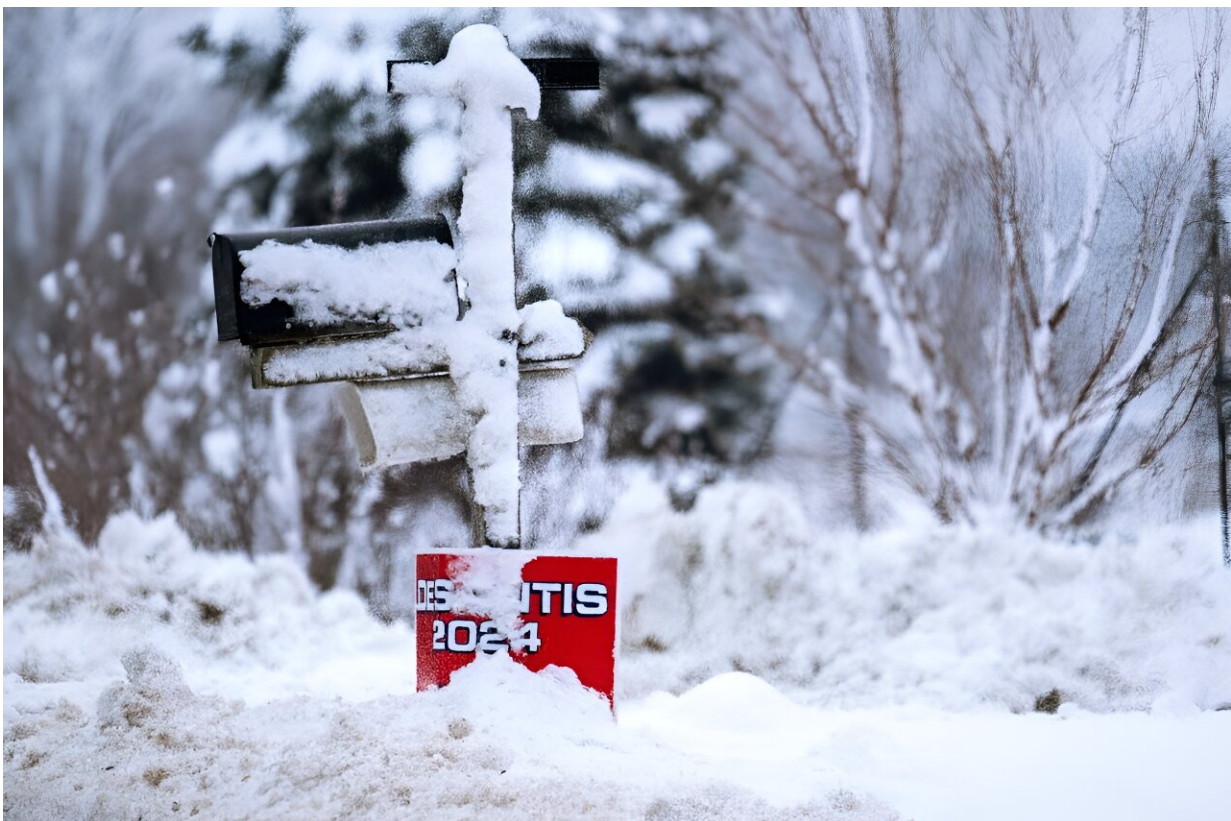
"Treacherous driving is expected to continue through the rest of today and into tonight," the state's local NWS posted on social media. "Travel is highly discouraged!"

In an update, it said blizzard conditions would continue into Saturday "followed by dangerous cold and wind chills through the weekend & early next week."

The weather raised serious concerns over caucus turnout as Haley and DeSantis seek to overtake former president Donald Trump, who is leading polls for the Republican presidential nomination by a wide margin nationally and in Iowa.

"We're going to get people to the polls on caucus night" regardless of the weather, the state's Republican Governor Kim Reynolds promised.

Former UN ambassador and South Carolina governor Haley moved all of Friday's events online, even as she had implored Iowans to not let the weather stop them from showing up Monday.



Snow contest: campaign events in Iowa have been put on hold as freezing weather and heavy snow grips the state.

"I'll brave anything we need to," DeSantis told reporters standing outside in the snow.

"We want to win, we're here to get every vote we can," said the 45-year-old hoping to face President Joe Biden in the general election later this year.

But Trump, who pledged to his supporters that he'd make it to Iowa ahead of the vote despite the weather, is counting on a resounding win in the state to help him quickly bag the nomination as his four criminal indictments loom.

"It's gonna be a little bit of a trek. Nobody knows how exactly we're gonna get there, but we're gonna figure it out," Trump said in a video posted to his Truth Social platform.

"We wouldn't miss it for anything," he added.

Flight chaos

Flights carrying thousands of reporters and political observers to Iowa were canceled or rerouted to neighboring states, also facing fallout from the massive storm.



A person crosses a snow-covered street in the East Village neighborhood of Des Moines, Iowa, on January 12, 2024.

More than 2,000 flights were canceled across the country, including more than 400 at Chicago's O'Hare Airport, according to [flightaware.com](https://www.flightaware.com).

By Friday evening, the lights were back on for most customers in Illinois, where local media reported that more than 100,000 had lost power earlier in the day as wind and snow pummeled the state.

Further west, the NWS said Montana and the Dakotas could see temperatures as low as -50 degrees Fahrenheit.

"These extreme apparent temperatures will pose a risk of frostbite on exposed skin and hypothermia," the agency warned.

The [winter weather](#) was also threatening key football games over the weekend, as the NFL enters its post-season.

While Missouri's Kansas City Chiefs are more accustomed to the cold predicted for Saturday's game, the opposing Miami Dolphins are used to the balmy weather of Florida.



Florida Governor and 2024 Republican presidential hopeful Ron DeSantis speaks to the press outside of his campaign headquarters in Urbandale, Iowa, on January 12, 2024.

The western United States was also expected to get hit with snow, as a storm system collides with freezing Arctic air.

Forecasters said there could be considerable accumulation over parts of Oregon, Idaho and Utah, while sleet and freezing rain were expected Friday and Saturday in the south and northeast.

The storms come on the heels of severe cold [weather](#) that slammed much of the United States earlier in the week, causing several deaths and knocking out power to hundreds of thousands of homes and businesses.

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