

Sprawling storm threatens several US states, thousands evacuated

March 14 2019



The intense storm affected much of the nation's midsection, with "heavy snows" and "blizzard conditions", as well as flooding in certain areas

A massive late-winter storm hit several central US states Thursday, forcing thousands to evacuate, snarling air traffic and leaving drivers stranded.

There were widespread road closures and more than 1,000 flights canceled at the worst affected airports.

The intense storm affected much of the nation's midsection with "heavy snows, blizzard conditions and widespread wind gusts over hurricane force," according to the National Weather Service.

"Travel will remain difficult and life threatening across these areas," the NWS said.

The deluge caused flooding in parts of Nebraska and Iowa.

Raging waters washed away a bridge in one part of Nebraska, while nearly toppling a levee near the small city of Norfolk—requiring thousands of residents to evacuate.

"It's a very serious event, one of the most serious we've seen in our history," Norfolk Mayor Josh Moenning told a news briefing.

Law enforcement in the state launched rescues of stranded people in various communities due to flooded roads and buildings.

"Many rivers are now cresting, but others have yet to," the National Weather Service in Omaha said.

"As water works from tributaries to main arteries, additional crests can occur downstream."

Numerous tornado warnings were issued from the South in Alabama to the Midwest in Indiana.

One tornado touched down in a sparsely-populated area of Kentucky.

State police said it caused damage over a five-square-mile region but only one non-life-threatening injury.

"First responders are checking all residences in the area to ensure everyone's safety," the police said in a statement.

In Iowa, a [small town](#) of about 200 people was evacuated after a levee breach sent water flooding into the area, according to the Des Moines Register.

Nearly 800 flights were canceled at the Denver airport, a day after all runways were closed by howling wind and snow in Colorado.

More than 300 flights also were canceled in Chicago.

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