

Powerful Blizzard Takes Aim at Northeastern US

The **northeastern United States** braced for a possibly historic blizzard that could drop up to three feet of snow from Friday to Saturday and bring travel to a halt.

Blizzard warnings were in effect from New Jersey through southern Maine, with Boston expected to bear the brunt of the **storm**. The day began with light snow and winds that were due to pick up with much heavier snowfall by afternoon.

Officials urged residents to stay home, rather than risk getting stuck in deep drifts or whiteout conditions.

In New York City, still not fully recovered from the effects of October's devastating **Hurricane Sandy**, officials said they had 1,800 Sanitation Department trucks equipped with snow plows ready to be deployed.

Motorists, mindful of the severe fuel disruptions after Sandy, rushed to buy gasoline, leading to shortages in New York City. A Reuters photographer reported at least three service stations had run out of gas in the borough of Queens on Friday morning, with long lines formed at others.

Sandy knocked out power to hundreds of thousands of homes, taking gasoline stations out of service, and damaged port facilities, exacerbating the shortages by preventing operable stations from refueling.

"You always get long lines ahead of a storm, but as the wounds from Hurricane Sandy are still so fresh, it's not surprising that people are rushing to fill up," said Michael Watt, executive director of the Long Island Gasoline Retailers Association. "It's understandable. Even people like me who would normally think it was foolish to panic buy will be thinking about it."

Boston and surrounding communities said schools would be closed on Friday, and city and state officials told nonessential city workers to stay home.

Officials across the region ordered nonessential government workers to stay home, urged private employers to do the same, told people to prepare for power outages, and encouraged them to check on elderly or disabled neighbors.

In New Jersey, also hit hard by Sandy, state officials expected major coastal flooding, high winds and possible blizzard conditions in the northeastern section of the state.

"This is a dangerous storm, and we ask motorists to be careful while driving," said Colonel Rick Fuentes, director of the New Jersey Office of Emergency Management. "(The) evening commute will be treacherous throughout much of New Jersey."

The **National Weather Service**, warning of a "major, maybe even historic, snowstorm," said Boston and much of New England could get up to three feet of **snow** on Friday and Saturday, its first heavy snowfall in two years. Winds could gust as high as 60 miles to 70 miles per hour.

If more than 18.2 inches of snow falls in Boston, it will rank among the city's 10 largest snowfalls. Boston's record snowfall, 27.6 inches, came in 2003.

Cities from Hartford, Connecticut, to Portland, Maine, were expected to see at least one foot of snow.

Airlines have canceled more than 3,000 flights for Friday, according to website , with the largest number of cancellations at airports in Newark, New Jersey; New York City; Chicago and Boston.

Another 881 flights were canceled for Saturday, according to the flight-tracking site.

Boston's Logan International Airport warned that once the storm roars in, all flights would likely be grounded for 24

hours.

United Continental Holdings Inc, JetBlue Airways Corp and Delta Air Lines Inc all reported extensive cancellations.

Echoes of '78

For some in the Boston area, the forecast brought to mind memories of the blizzard of 1978, which dropped 27.1 inches, the second largest snowfall recorded in the city's history. That storm started out gently and intensified during the day, leaving many motorists stranded during the evening commute.

Dozens of deaths were reported in the region after that storm, many from people touching downed electric lines.

Officials warned of a high risk of extensive power outages across the region due to the combination of heavy snow and high winds. Residents were also at risk of losing heat at a time when temperatures would dip to 20 degrees Fahrenheit.

Across the region, store shelves were picked clean of food and storm-related supplies such as shovels and salt as residents scrambled to prepare.

Some big employers said they were considering pleas by officials to let workers stay home, including State Street Corp, one of Boston's largest employers in the financial sector.

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