

Blizzard claims at least 14 lives in US Northeast and Canada

By Kate Randall
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At least 14 people have died as a result of a massive snowstorm that swept through the US Northeast and Canada on Friday and Saturday. As of Sunday afternoon, more than 310,000 people remained without power, mostly in Massachusetts, down from a high of about 650,000.

Travel was paralyzed along the New York to Boston corridor, home to some 25 million people, as the blizzard dumped three feet of snow in some areas. The snow measured 24.9 inches deep in Boston, the fifth largest accumulation in the city's history. The deepest snow was in Hamden, Connecticut, which saw 40 inches, while Portland, Maine reported 31.9 inches, the most ever recorded there from a single storm.

Hurricane-force winds were reported, gusting to 76 mph in Boston and 84 mph in Cuttyhunk, Massachusetts at the height of the storm. High winds and wetter snow in southeast Massachusetts, Cape Cod and Rhode Island contributed to power outages, as above-ground power lines were knocked down. Residents in some coastal communities were urged to evacuate as an anticipated storm surge combined with high tides threatened their homes.

Just less than a foot of snow fell in New York City, while Long Island was hit with 30 inches in some parts. Hundreds of drivers were stranded on Long Island highways Friday night. In Connecticut, state police reported about 600 traffic accidents and close to 100 motorists had to be rescued by National Guard troops.

Travel bans were imposed in Massachusetts, Connecticut and Rhode Island until 4 p.m. Saturday, as public works crews began to plough the streets. Many side roads still remained impassable on Sunday. Doorways piled high with snowdrifts posed a danger for some residents, especially the elderly and handicapped, making them impassable in case of a fire

or other emergency.

The MBTA, the Boston-area public transit system, shut down completely Friday afternoon and resumed limited train and bus service at 2 p.m. Sunday. Amtrak shut down its New York to Boston train service and resumed it on a limited basis Sunday. Boston's Logan airport was closed during the storm and was operating with delays and cancellations on Sunday.

Entergy Corp.'s Pilgrim nuclear power plant in Plymouth, Massachusetts, shut down during the storm when it lost its outside power supply. According to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, the reactor shut down without incident and backup generators were powering plant equipment.

As of Sunday afternoon, utility companies in Massachusetts were reporting more than 234,000 of their power customers were still in the dark, down from more than 400,000. About 55,580 customers were still without power in Rhode Island, while more than 16,000 in Connecticut were still experiencing outages. Power remained out for some 3,800 businesses and residences in the state of New York.

Public anger with the utility companies is still running high more than three months after Hurricane Sandy, which knocked out power to 8.66 million homes and businesses in 21 states and claimed more than 125 lives. During the past weekend's blizzard and the cold snap that preceded it thousands of families in New Jersey and New York have been living in homes without heat, electricity or running water, or living in hotels, where they forced to move every two weeks by FEMA. Others are sheltering in tent cities set up by aid workers, with only small propane heaters, sleeping bags and blankets to protect them from the elements.

The death toll from the blizzard—14 in the US and Canada as of Sunday—is expected to rise. Most of the

deaths have been related to snow removal, traffic accidents and carbon monoxide poisoning.

The three reported deaths in Canada were in southern Ontario, where an 80-year-old woman collapsed shoveling her driveway and two men were killed in car crashes.

There have been five storm related deaths reported so far in Connecticut. A Prospect woman in her 80s was killed Friday night when she was struck by a car while using a snowblower. A 49-year-old man died overnight Friday in Shelton after his snowplough became stuck, his body not found until 4 a.m. Saturday. A Bridgeport man was found dead under the snow in his driveway on Saturday afternoon, and a man was found dead Saturday on his porch in Danbury, possibly after a slip and fall accident or a heart attack.

A 23-year-old man in New York state died while ploughing his driveway when his tractor went off the road. An 18-year-old woman in Poughkeepsie lost control of her car in the snow and struck a 74-year-old man walking near the side of the road. He died later from his injuries.

In Massachusetts, storm-related traffic accidents claimed at least one life. Two others fell victim to carbon monoxide poisoning, including a 20-year-old who was found dead in his car in Mattapan on Saturday.

An 11-year-old boy from the Roxbury neighborhood of Boston died Saturday from carbon monoxide poisoning while sitting in his family's running car. The boy and his father had been shoveling a walkway when the boy got in the car to get warm. The vehicle's exhaust pipe was blocked by about four feet of snow, causing the car to fill up with the poisonous fumes.

"The car filled up with carbon monoxide gases that weren't escaping through the exhaust system and the boy was overcome. He went into cardiac arrest," a Boston Fire Department spokesman reported.

A neighbor heard the father's cries for help and ran to give CPR. The father subsequently went into respiratory arrest. "The father brings the little boy into my hallway and lays him on the ground and then he comes back out and collapses himself," Shakina Rhifer told Channel 7 news.

The father and son were transported to Boston Medical Center, where the boy died and the father was treated for shock and survived.

Two other Boston-area children narrowly escaped death after breathing in carbon monoxide as they were warming up in their father's running car. An off-duty firefighter responded to the father's frantic emergency call. The children, ages five and eight, were hospitalized and are expected to survive.

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