

World News Roundup

Weather

'Bomb cyclone'

Storm 'threatening' Thanksgiving plans

MINNEAPOLIS, Nov 28, (AP): A day after bringing havoc to the Rocky Mountains, a powerful winter storm rolled across the Midwest on Wednesday, threatening to scramble Thanksgiving plans for millions of people during one of the busiest travel weeks of the year.

The storm, which was blamed for one death and hundreds of canceled flights, pushed east into South Dakota, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota and Wisconsin. It dropped close to a foot of snow in some areas even as the system weakened and headed toward New York and Pennsylvania.



Hogan

But the West was not free of heavy weather. A "bomb cyclone" caused by a rapid drop in air pressure brought snow to the mountains and wind and rain along the California and Oregon coasts. Drivers on Interstate 5 near the Oregon-California border spent 17 hours or more in stopped traffic as blizzard conditions whirled outside. Some slept in their vehicles.

"It's one of those things, you couldn't make it up if you tried," National Weather Service meteorologist Brent Hewett said of back-to-back storms forming around the holiday.

Christina Williams and her 13-year-old son, who live in Portland, Oregon, got stuck in the storm as they tried to drive to the San Francisco area for Thanksgiving. Williams said she and other stranded drivers connected on Twitter using weather-related hashtags and began to communicate to find out what conditions were like in other parts of the backup.

Abandoned

"There were spinouts everywhere. There were trucks that were abandoned. And every time we stopped and started moving again, there were people who couldn't start moving again," Williams said. "Every time we stopped I was like, 'Is this it? Are we going to be here overnight?'"

It took more than 17 hours to reach Redding, California, where they got a hotel room, she said.

Snow and downed trees and power lines closed roads. Others were reduced to a single lane, transportation officials said.

Northbound lanes of Interstate 5, which runs parallel to the coast, were reopened later Wednesday from Redding, California all the way to the Oregon border. The southbound lanes at Ashland, Oregon, reopened earlier in the day.

Transportation officials and other agencies tried to communicate the seriousness of the storm, but many drivers were still caught by surprise, said Don Anderson, deputy director of the California Department of Transportation in Redding.

Minneapolis awoke to as much as 9 inches (23 centimeters) of snow. Drivers were warned to stay off the roads at least until the winds died down.

"If you can wait a little bit today, the better off you'll be because the roads will be being cleared, and our snow is pretty much wrapping up," said Tyler Hasenstein, a weather service meteorologist in Minneapolis.

At the city's main airport, Delta Air Lines filled de-icing tanks, called in extra flight dispatchers and assigned some of its 20 in-house meteorologists to focus on the forecast.

Airport spokesman Patrick Hogan said three runways were open Wednesday, but Federal Aviation Administration data showed that travelers were still experiencing delays of more than an hour.

At Chicago's O'Hare Airport, one of the nation's busiest, the FAA said heavy traffic was causing delays of up to 30 minutes and rising. Airlines worried that things could get worse if winds picked up.

In the city's Loop business district, high winds peeled a wooden sign off scaffolding at Willis Tower. The sign slammed into two vehicles and smashed a window, hurting a cab driver, who was taken to a hospital with an arm injury, police said.

The northern reaches of Wisconsin saw 7 to 10 inches (18 to 25 centimeters) of snow, with more coming down. The Milwaukee airport reported wind and rain, but there was no snow within a hundred miles of the city.

On Tuesday, weather-related damage and delays were widespread.

About 10 inches (25 centimeters) of snow mixed with winds that limited visibility and canceled about 30% of the 1,600 average daily flights at Denver's main airport.

Southwest Airlines canceled about 200 flights. Spokesman Brad Hawkins said it would take a couple of days to rebook stranded passengers on other flights because there are few empty seats during the pre-Thanksgiving travel crush.

About 1,100 people spent the night at the airport, spokeswoman Alex Renteria said.

Airport workers handed out blankets, diapers, baby formula, toothbrushes and toothpaste to passengers who camped out on floors and in chairs.



In this photo provided by Caltrans, are cars and trucks in stopped traffic on Interstate 5 near Dunsmuir, Calif., Nov 27. Thanksgiving travel has been snarled in some places by two powerful storms. A winter storm blamed for one death and hundreds of canceled flights in the West moved into the Midwest on Wednesday and dropped close to a foot of snow in parts of Minnesota and Wisconsin. (AP)

America

Fatalities in crash: Police in Kingston, Ontario, say there are fatalities after a small plane crashed in a wooded area within the city limits.

The police force says in a tweet late Wednesday night that the aircraft has been located and officers are securing the scene until Transport Canada arrives to join the investigation.

Constable Ash Gutheinz says the aircraft went down around the supper hour Wednesday and residents of the area were not at risk.

Investigators have not released information on how many people were on board.

Police also won't release the make of the aircraft or say whether it is a private or commercial plane.

Transport Canada says it is aware of the crash. (AP)

Spencer criticizes Trump:

Richard Spencer, who was fired as Navy secretary for his handling of a SEAL war crimes case championed by President Donald Trump, wrote that the commander in chief "has very little understanding" of how the American military works.

The extraordinary accusation came in an opinion piece published on The Washington Post's website Wednesday evening, three days after he was fired. Spencer called Trump's intervention in the case of Navy Chief Petty Officer Edward Gallagher "shocking" and unprecedented.

Spencer was fired Sunday by Defense Secretary Mark Esper for working a private deal with the White House to ensure that Gallagher be allowed to retire without losing his SEAL status. In his Post article, Spencer acknowledged his mistake but also asserted that Trump's actions were detrimental to the military.

Spencer said Trump had involved himself in the Gallagher case "almost from the start," by telephoning Spencer even before the SEAL's court martial started to ask that Gallagher be moved out of confinement at a Navy brig. Spencer said he resisted Trump because the presiding judge had decided that confinement was important. Nonetheless, Trump ordered Spencer to transfer Gallagher from the brig to the equivalent of an enlisted barracks.

Spencer said he believes Trump's interest in the case stemmed partly from the way Gallagher's defense lawyers and others "worked to keep it front and center in the media."

After Gallagher was acquitted of most charges but convicted of posing with the corpse of an Islamic State extremist in Iraq, he submitted his request to retire. In Spencer's telling, that raised three questions for the Navy, including whether Gallagher should be allowed to retire at his current rank. The military jury had said he should be demoted.

Trump, who had tweeted support for Gallagher and stated that his case had been "handled very badly from the beginning," short-circuited the Navy's administrative review of Gallagher's status by ordering Spencer to restore Gallagher's rank.

"This was a shocking and unprecedented intervention in a low-level review," Spencer wrote. "It was also a reminder that the president has very little understanding of what it means to be in the military, to fight ethically or to be governed by a uniform set of rules and practices." (AP)

Appeals court issues stay: The US Court of Appeals for the DC Circuit has issued an administrative stay of a lower court's ruling ordering former White House counsel Donald McGahn to appear before Congress.

In its order Wednesday night, the appeals court says it will consider issuing a longer stay and set oral arguments for a hearing Jan 3.

US District Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson had ruled Monday that McGahn would have to appear before Congress in response to a subpoena, rejecting the Trump administration's argument that "absolute immunity" shielded top aides from congressional questioning. (AP)

3 hurt at chemical plant hit by 2 explosions

PORT NECHES, Texas, Nov 28, (AP): Two massive explosions 13 hours apart tore through a Texas chemical plant Wednesday, and one left three workers injured.

The blasts blew out windows and doors of nearby homes and prompted a mandatory evacuation of a 4-mile (7-kilometer) radius from the plant in Port Neches in Southeast Texas, about 80 miles (129 kilometers) east of Houston. Officials say they have no estimate for how long the fire will burn.

The initial explosion at the TPC Group plant, which makes chemical and petroleum-based products, occurred around 1 a.m. It sent a large plume of smoke stretching for miles and started a fire.

The three workers hurt during the blast — two TPC employees and a contractor — were treated at hospitals and released, said Troy Monk, TPC's director of health, safety and security. About 30 employees working at the plant at the time of the explosion were all accounted

for, according to TPC.

Jefferson County Judge Jeff Branick, the top county official, told Beaumont TV station KFDM that it's a miracle no one died. He said one worker suffered burns and the others had a broken wrist and a broken leg.

Monk said the blast occurred in an area of the plant that makes butadiene, a chemical used to make synthetic rubber and other products. He said the plant has 175 full-time employees and 50 contract

workers.

The second blast ripped through the plant about 2 p.m., sending a steel reactor tower rocketing high into the air. That prompted Jefferson County Judge Jeff Branick, the top county official, to order a mandatory evacuation of Port Neches and neighboring Groves, Nederland and part of Port Arthur. Water cannons were trained on surrounding plant works and tanks to keep them cool and avoid further explosions.



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