

Major storm pummels swaths of country with ice, snow, bitter cold

The storm, which has already caused power outages and a number of pileups, is expected to travel up the Northeast through Tuesday.

A major winter storm plowed across the country on Monday, delivering heavy snow, ice, and temperatures so low they broke records in some places.

More than 150 million Americans in 26 states, stretching 2,000 miles from Texas to Maine, were in the path of the historic storm as power outages — particularly in Texas where 2 million were without power — left people shivering in the dark.

Slick, icy roads in some states led to pileups, endangering more lives in a winter storm system that's claimed as many as 12 lives across the country in recent days.

The storm was expected to travel up the Northeast through Tuesday, bringing heavy snow, ice, and freezing temperatures, the National Weather Service said. Six inches to a foot of snow was forecast to stretch from the mid-Mississippi to the Ohio valleys, across the lower Great Lakes, and into northern New England, according to the service.

It also warned about more power outages and significant travel disruptions across much of the southern Plains, as well as "bitterly cold air" that can result in "dangerous or life-threatening wind chills."

As of Monday afternoon, there were reports of ice pellets falling in Nashville, a possible "snow-nado" in Texas, and emergency responders mobilizing in multiple states.

Snow fell in east Texas, Arkansas, parts of Illinois, Kentucky, Indiana, and Ohio on Monday morning, with wind chills reaching minus 16 degrees Fahrenheit in Dallas and minus 26 in Kansas City.

Heavy snow was accumulating in Oklahoma City, where more than 6 inches has already fallen.

As the plains continue to grapple with the Arctic chill, the National Weather

Prediction Center said numerous new record lows were established Monday, including minus 6 in Oklahoma City and 5 degrees in Dallas.

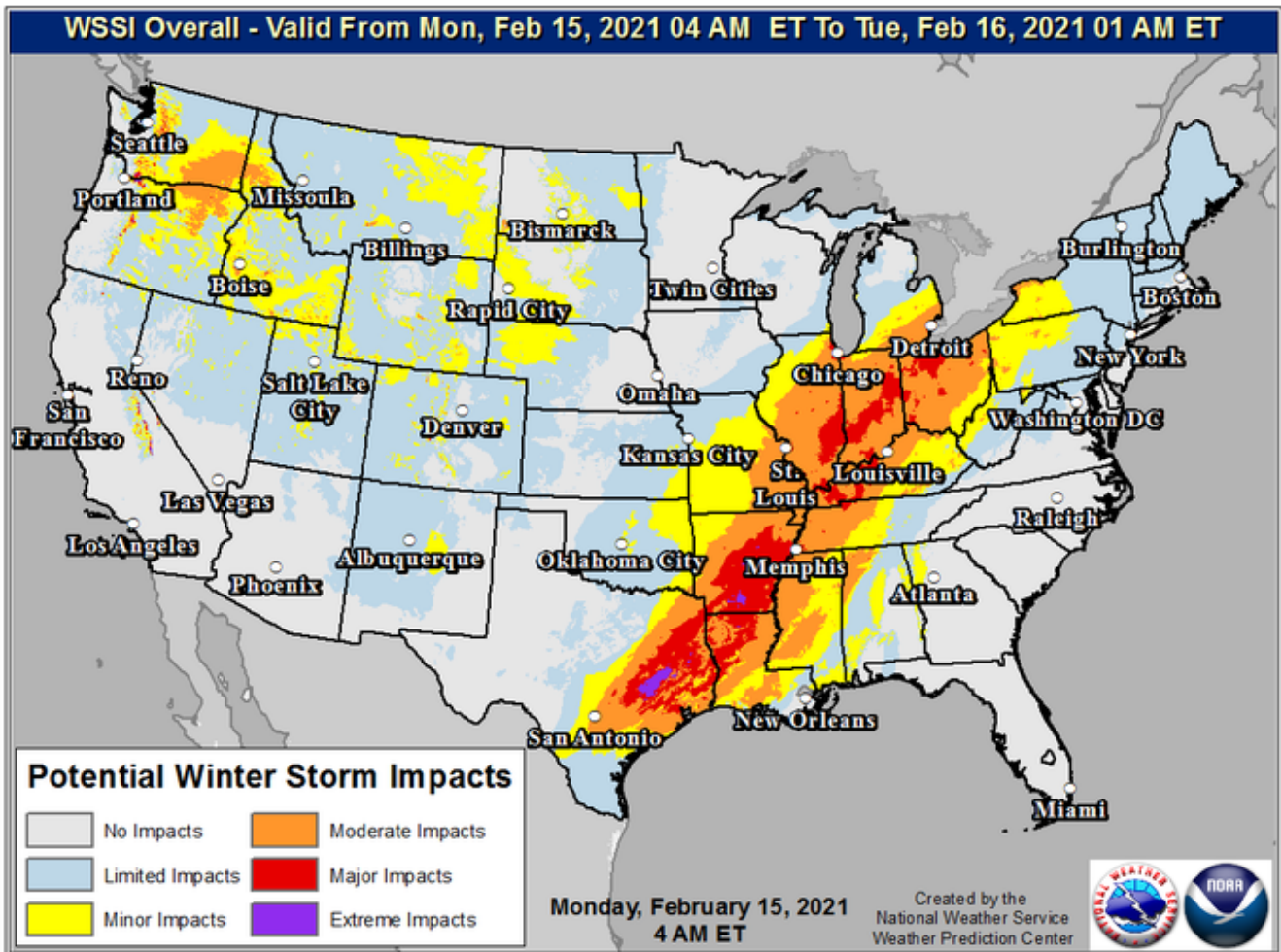
At least parts of all 254 counties in Texas were under either a winter storm watch or a winter storm warning over the weekend. As of 9:40 a.m. ET, 2.6 million people in Texas were experiencing power blackouts.

The weather was affecting operations at airports across the area, with more than 760 flights canceled at the Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport amid a holiday weekend. On Monday, the airport said single-digit temperatures continued to affect its operations.

The first winter storm watch in a decade was issued for Brownsville, Texas. At 3,360 days, they had the longest streak of any National Weather Service office without one.

The Electric Reliability Council of Texas, which manages the flow of electric power in the state, said it was experiencing record-breaking electric demand due to the extreme cold temperatures that have gripped the state.

Here's the #Winter #Storm Severity Index for #today, February 15. Major to extreme impacts are possible from southeast Texas to northern portions of Ohio, as a massive winter storm lifts from the Gulf Coast to the Ohio Valley.



Houston was issued its first wind chill warning on record over the weekend.

As temperatures dropped Monday, Mayor Sylvester Turner warned that authorities were dealing with systemwide power outages across the state and that power could be out a lot longer than expected.

“For those without power, I know it is cold,” Turner tweeted. “The mayor is in the same position but we will get through this together.”

Houston police Chief Art Acevedo asked residents to keep use to a minimum to reduce the load on the electric grid, adding that several of Houston Police facilities were running on emergency generators.

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In a statement Sunday night, President Joe Biden declared an emergency in Texas and ordered federal assistance to aid state and local response efforts.

The extreme cold dips far into Texas with more than 60 daily record-low

temperatures Monday and again Tuesday in the central U.S., NBC meteorologist Janessa Webb said.

“Records could be smashed by a couple of degrees, which is impressive for lows,” she added. “There will be slow improvement in the cold Wednesday through Friday. The cold is really concentrated in the middle of the country, with the coasts being no more than 5-10 degrees below average.”



A person walks under a blanket in below-freezing temperatures in Houston on Monday. David J. Phillip / AP

Webb said Dallas and Houston will stay under winter storm warnings until Monday night, with snow accumulations of up to 4 inches and 2 inches respectively.

Dangerous icy conditions have developed in southern Louisiana, central Mississippi, and northwest Alabama, forcing some counties in the state to shutter medical facilities, including clinics where Covid-19 vaccinations were being administered.

Snow and ice will be ending in Texas and Louisiana on Monday afternoon, but the bitter cold will still be in place. Oklahoma City is forecast to only make it to 1 degree Fahrenheit, San Antonio 24 degrees, and Dallas 15 degrees.

Heavier snow is expected to expand into the Midwest and the Great Lakes by Monday evening, including Chicago, most of Ohio and Indiana, Detroit, and Buffalo.



People walk on ice-covered sidewalks in downtown Nashville, Tenn., on Monday. Brett Carlsen / Getty Images

On Tuesday, record lows in the south will be challenged and potentially shattered, with Dallas forecast to come in at 6 degrees — the 1903 record currently stands at 12.

Oklahoma City's forecast low is minus 3, with the current record-holding at 4 degrees, also since 1903.

The coast-to-coast storm will finally be moving offshore by Tuesday night, with some lingering snow in northern New England, but the icy air will stay in place

and spread into the Northeast.

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