

## 'Coldest night of winter' on way

**Snow and ice are set to continue causing problems across the UK with warnings that Thursday night could be the coldest of the winter so far.**

Temperatures could plummet to -20C (-4F), including in parts of the South, setting new local records.

UK-wide severe weather warnings of ice are in place amid freezing temperatures and "nightmare" side road conditions.

Thousands of schools have remained shut and travel problems continue, while power cuts have hit thousands of homes.

Temperatures barely rose above freezing on Thursday, remaining between -8C and 0C in most parts of the UK after plummeting to nearly -18C on Wednesday night.

The icy weather is predicted to continue for days to come, with more snow for eastern England overnight and on Friday.

Strong north-easterly winds are forecast for southern England, with warnings this could cause snow to drift.

More snow is forecast for central and southern parts of the UK on Sunday.

Many councils are restricting gritting to major roads as supplies dwindle, with supplies in some areas close to running out.

A survey of councils by the BBC found most had enough supplies to last another two to five days but were unable to meet guidelines brought in after the snowfall of February 2009 that they should have at least six days' supply.

### **Salt from Sweden**

Many were hoping to replenish stocks soon under the new government prioritisation scheme announced earlier.

Transport Minister Sadiq Khan said the government was working with councils, devolved administrations and the Highways Agency to help salt-suppliers prioritise deliveries.

### **WEATHER AND TRAVEL INFO**

- Get the latest on school closures and travel problems via your website
- Check if snow is forecast in your area at website
- For information about severe weather warnings, see the website
- For information about staying healthy in the current cold snap, see the

The Local Government Association has admitted the supply is "stretched".

Blackpool council says it will run out of grit on Thursday night, with no idea when more will be delivered. Bracknell Forest, in Berkshire, says its grit situation is "critical".

Scarborough council, in North Yorkshire, is using sand from beaches to grit pavements, while Enfield, in north London, has ordered salt from Sweden to keep its supplies topped up.

BBC Radio 5 live's travel reporter, Nick Duncalf, said it was so cold that grit might have no effect, although most major routes were "fairly under control" with light traffic levels.

Police warned drivers in many areas not to travel unless their journey was essential.

An AA spokesman said: "Drivers should not be lulled into a false sense of security by the break in the heavy snow - ice is far more dangerous to drive on than snow."

### **Power grid alert**

By 1700 GMT, the AA had attended more than 16,000 breakdowns. That figure was expected to reach 20,000 by the end of the day, compared with 9,000 on a normal Thursday.

[HAVE YOUR SAY](#) What happens if this weather stays with us for 3 to 4 weeks? Snowman, Essex

Temperatures in some areas are already dropping, with the sea in Aberystwyth marina reported to have frozen.

The National Grid issued its second gas alert in three days, with demand expected to hit a new record of 454m cubic metres on Thursday.

The current record is 449m cubic metres, set on 7 January 2003.

A spokeswoman said technical problems had led to a supply shortfall of 52m cubic metres from the Langeled pipeline, which takes gas from Norway.

### **Energy 'vulnerability'**

The National Grid said other suppliers were putting more gas into the network and major customers were cutting back on usage in response to the alert.

#### **AT THE SCENE**

#### **BBC's Alison Harper in Clanfield, Hants**

Under 12in of snow, there are 100 cars abandoned as you enter Clanfield, but many are more concerned about the power cuts.

The unexpected outage sent temperatures tumbling. Many here used traditional wood-burning stoves. Some cuts lasted an hour; some into Thursday.

A family clad in pink fleeces and ear-warmers said they used their time playing murder-in-the-dark, before heading for bed.

A couple enjoying a brisk walk said they'd made the most of the power cut with a romantic candlelit dinner.

And while local people may have had different ways of dealing with the dark and cold, they did agree on one thing: they expect more power cuts this cold snap, but next time they intend to be better prepared.

Some industrial users in north-west England and the East Midlands on "interruptible contracts" have been told their gas supplies will be reduced.

In return for reduced tariffs they agree to take lower supply levels when required by the National Grid. This has not happened for four years.

Roger Salomone, of the Engineering Employers' Federation, said the move had exposed the "longstanding vulnerability in our energy system", showing the nation had to "take security of our energy supply more seriously", including increasing gas storage facilities.

About 5,000 homes across southern England were without electricity as of 1500 GMT because of trees falling on power lines and safety mechanisms being triggered by ice weighing down cables.

Up to 25,000 homes across Britain have been similarly affected since Wednesday.

Eurostar is running a limited service after the breakdown of a Brussels to London train in the Channel Tunnel.

Eurotunnel is only allowing one Eurostar train at a time in the tunnel, which means delays for travellers.

All major airports are operating but passengers have been warned to expect delays.

Budget airline Easyjet has cancelled more than 100 flights on Thursday, mostly at Gatwick, where a total of 136 inbound and outbound flights were scrapped. British Airways has also cancelled some flights.

### **Body under lake**

Rail services have been severely disrupted by the weather, with train cancellations by several operators.

Widespread school closures have continued, with about 950 shut in Wales, 700 in Scotland and thousands across England.

The Federation of Small Businesses has criticised head teachers for closing schools too readily, saying lost working days affect many companies.

- A man's body was found under ice in a lake at the Lakeside Country Club in Frimley Green, Surrey, on Thursday morning

- A teenage boy died and his mother was seriously injured when they were hit by a lorry on the A1 in North Yorkshire on Wednesday night
- A 42-year-old man also died on the A1 when his car crashed with a lorry south of Cockburnspath in Berwickshire
- A man was treated in hospital after being injured when the weight of snow caused a cattle shed to collapse in Aberdeenshire
- Dozens of farm buildings are reported to have collapsed under the weight of snow in north-east Scotland

Overnight temperatures on Wednesday plunged to a low of -18C in Woodford in Greater Manchester and Benson in Oxfordshire. Monitors recorded -13C in Manchester, -6C in Glasgow and - 3C in central London.

Up to 5cm (2ins) of snow was forecast for eastern England during Thursday, with snow showers possible in Aberdeenshire, the Midlands, the South East, Pembrokeshire and Cornwall. Stronger winds could lead to some drifting.

Sporting fixtures continued to fall foul of the weather, with race meetings at Kempton and Lingfield called off and the weekend's racing, rugby and football fixtures under threat.

#### **FORECAST FROM BBC WEATHER**

Send your pictures and videos to [yourpics@bbc.co.uk](mailto:yourpics@bbc.co.uk) or text them to 61124. If you have a large file you can [upload here](#).

***We would also like to hear your experiences and memories, and see your pictures of the snow in 1963.***

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