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After the Big Snowstorm, the Struggle to Dig Out

By **N. R. KLEINFIELD** and **MARC SANTORA**

Residents and emergency workers in the Northeast struggled to dig out Sunday after a gigantic midwinter storm left much of the region buried under drifting snow and reeling from gale-force winds.

As temperatures dipped into the teens across the region, utility crews worked to restore power to the more than 650,000 customers who were blacked out by the storm.

By Sunday morning, more than 300,000 customers remained without power, mostly in southeastern Massachusetts and Cape Cod, Rhode Island and on the shore line of eastern Connecticut. NStar, which serves Massachusetts, said many regions were still too dangerous to send in crews.

Road crews also labored into the night to remove snow from streets and sidewalks, piling it in whatever open space they could find. In Connecticut, crews were using a front-end loader late Saturday night to remove snow from I-95 near Fairfield.

The storm, spawned by the collision of two weather systems, affected more than 40 million people, though early reports suggest that it accounted for only a handful of deaths. One tragic case involved a young boy shoveling snow with his father in the Dorchester neighborhood of Boston who died of carbon monoxide poisoning after he retreated inside a car to warm up. The exhaust pipe had been blocked by snow.

More than three feet of snow fell in parts of Connecticut, and more than two feet accumulated on Long Island and in Massachusetts, where the storm caused coastal flooding that forced evacuations of some communities. The Weather Service said it had reports out of New Haven County of 36.2 inches falling in Oxford and 38 inches in Milford. Commack, on Long Island, got 29.1 inches of snow and MacArthur Airport in Islip, 27.5 inches. In Boston, the official accumulation was 24.9 inches, the fifth highest in city history.

In Connecticut, some streets resembled ski slopes or mountain passes, and President Obama declared a state of emergency there, ordering federal aid to supplement local emergency

Airlines were also trying to return to normal Sunday, after canceling more than 5,000 flights. The fallout could reverberate for days. Logan International Airport in Boston and the thr



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around New York City have all resumed operations.

For many areas, “this storm will rank in the top five of recorded snowstorms,” said David Stark, a meteorologist for the National Weather Service in eastern Suffolk County on Long Island. Outside his office, measurements have been taken since 1949, and this storm beat them all, with 30.9 inches.

“The way this evolved was a very classic winter nor’easter,” Mr. Stark said. “The way it formed and moved is well understood, and it is the type of situation we have seen in the past — but this storm brought more moisture and therefore more snow.”

Though New York City was spared the worst of the damage, out on Long Island the situation was more grim. On Sunday, Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo of New York said officials had scrambled to send workers and equipment to Suffolk County, where hundreds of motorists were trapped on roadways during the storm because of quickly falling snow. In what he described as one of the largest emergency mobilizations for a snowstorm in state history, Mr. Cuomo said over 600 pieces of snow removal equipment and about 1,000 extra workers had been sent to dig out the county.

“The state will continue to do everything possible to augment existing recovery work, and will ensure that residents of Suffolk County can go back to life as normal as quickly as possible,” Mr. Cuomo said in a statement Sunday morning.

A large section of the Long Island Expressway, which runs through Suffolk County, was closed on Sunday to clear snow. Michael Krieger, 47, traveled from Raleigh, N.C., to Suffolk County with a snow removal crew and spent Saturday and early Sunday clearing parking lots. He said Saturday’s sun had melted some of the snow and created a crust of ice above wet, heavy snow.

“It’s a lot harder to dig through this stuff,” said Mr. Krieger, who will be sent to Boston later on Sunday. “It’s a tedious deal. Arduous.”

Tristan James, 28, a truck driver from Binghamton, N.Y., has been stranded on Long Island after his truck got stuck on the Long Island Expressway on Friday. Though he freed the vehicle on Saturday and moved it to a Kmart parking lot, he was having difficulty getting back to it on Sunday because few taxis are running in the area.

“I just want to go home, this has gone on long enough,” he said, shaking his head. “I’m ready to leave.”

The National Weather Service received reports of flooding up and down the Massachusetts coast, especially in areas just north and south of Boston. Water carrying slabs of ice slogged through the streets and lapped against houses. The National Guard was sent to assist in evacuations.

Waves off the South Shore of Boston and parts of Cape Cod measured as high as 20 feet. Two feet of water was observed in Winthrop, Mass., just north of Boston. Waters breached a sea wall in the Humarock section of Scituate, while roads in Gloucester, Marblehead and Revere were reported flooded or impassable.

States of emergency were declared in five states. Gov. Deval Patrick of Massachusetts banned travel on all roads as night fell on Friday, an order that remained in effect until 4 p.m. Saturday. Gov. Dannel P. Malloy of Connecticut reported cars stranded across his state despite orders to stay off the roads, and said several people were treated for hypothermia after spending hours trapped in their cars.

Governor Cuomo said New York would send crews to Connecticut and Massachusetts to help remove snow and restore power.

In Bridgeport, Conn., George Berry, 69, was stuck on a road in his Chrysler sedan, holding up traffic. He had worked the night shift at a supermarket and was almost home. Three men were digging out his car. Two of them had also been offering their services to homeowners, charging between \$20 and \$50.

The three men extricated Mr. Berry's car and he handed them \$20.

Coming less than four months after [Hurricane Sandy](#) walloped the New York-New Jersey area and boldly confirmed the merciless side of nature, weather-anxious residents took this storm very seriously. People crowded supermarkets and supply stores to stock up as the storm bore down on the region. Long lines formed at gas stations.

But it was impossible for some to stay home without power. More than 400,000 customers were reported without power in Massachusetts, and more than 180,000 in Rhode Island. The Pilgrim nuclear power plant in Plymouth, Mass., shut down because of the storm. On Long Island, about 10,000 customers were reported without power, the Long Island Power Authority said. New York City fared far better: 478 customers were out of power in Brooklyn, according to Consolidated Edison, the most of any borough. Manhattan was next with 184.

National Grid said it had more than 2,000 crews working to restore power in Rhode Island and eastern Massachusetts, including supplemental crews from 26 states and two Canadian provinces.

Areas in Norfolk and Plymouth Counties, south of Boston, were flooded when the ocean breached their sea walls. "Given the extensive damage to the electric system in these two counties, it will be at least a few days before all customers will have their power back in those areas," National Grid said.

Marcy Reed, president of National Grid, which also supplies power to the Long Island Power Authority,

said failures there could last several days because repairs would require unearthing power lines buried under mounds of snow.

In Massachusetts, National Guard soldiers were deployed, mainly in the southeastern part of the state, to retrieve residents and take them to warming centers and shelters. Yet even members of the Guard found themselves trapped at home; only about 2,000 out of a force of more than 5,000 managed to get out.

Betty Ludtke, the single mother of newborn twins and two other young children, woke up at midnight to find her Hyannis Port home on Cape Cod without electricity. To keep warm, they snuggled beneath down comforters on the living room floor. Her car was encased in snow.

“I wouldn’t be so worried for myself, but with the kids” she said. Then just before noon on Saturday, Wilson Dsouza, a close family friend who lives about four miles away, appeared at her door. He had flagged down a snowplow to get his own car out and took the Ludtkes back to his house.

The Boston Archdiocese released Roman Catholics from their obligation to attend Mass on Sunday, saying they should attend only if they could do so safely.

Many people in New York City woke up early to snap photos of snow-topped streetlamps and make fresh tracks on their way to find the best hill to go sledding. Or they looked to pick up income. In Red Hook, Brooklyn, Ashley Faria, 18, snow shovel in hand, had just cleared a neighbor’s stoop and sidewalk and collected \$20.

“I enjoy it, it’s peaceful,” she said. “I’m listening to my music. I could do it all day.”

Reporting was contributed by Jess Bidgood, Robert Davey, Ann Farmer, Dina Kraft, Elizabeth Maker, Eli Rosenberg, Nate Schweber, Michael Schwirtz, Katharine Q. Seelye, Ravi Somaiya, Alex Vadukul and Vivian Yee.