

Cold wave freezes ships to harbors, endangers crops, causes 80 deaths

■ **WEATHER:** Much of the South is without electricity and running water

Arctic cold spread misery in the East and the deep South on Monday, shattering low-temperature records that had stood for more than a century, imperiling Florida oranges, bursting pipes in New Orleans and freezing fishing boats to their moorings in North Carolina.

Temperatures dropped into the single digits as far south as Huntsville, Ala., at 4 degrees, Chattanooga, Tenn., at 2, and Meridian, Miss., at 8.

Thousands of people still had no electricity to help keep them warm after weekend ice storms snapped power lines. Seven people died at Newton, Miss., in a house fire believed caused by a kerosene heater that was fired up because the electricity failed.

That made a total of 80 deaths blamed on the weather across the nation since the cold wave burst onto the northern Plains last week and dropped temperatures as low as 60 below zero in Tower, Minn.

The Plains and upper Midwest began to warm slightly, but the morning lows in the South rewrote cold-weather records that

had been on the books since 1886, including 20 degrees in New Orleans and minus 10 in Lynchburg, Va.

Atlanta posted a non-record low of just 6 degrees. Savannah, on the Georgia shore, shivered at 19. Baton Rouge, La., hit a record 15 degrees; Hollywood, Fla., reached 34, also a record.

Cape Hatteras was North Carolina's warmest spot overnight — and it had a low of 14. One fisherman at Wanchese, N.C., was seen using a crowbar to chip his boat free of the ice that formed along Croatan Sound.

"Ice storms are disastrous for some folks in the north, but here we've never learned culturally how to deal with them because it's only been in our experience about every 10 years," said Orville Cunningham, sociology professor at Mississippi's Jackson State University.

Pipes burst in New Orleans, where houses are mounted on piers to protect them against flooding, a design that exposes the plumbing to the cold. Southerners let water trickle from the tap to keep the pipes from freezing.

Debbie Janssen said she remembered to open all her spigots except for those in a bathroom — where the pipes burst. The real

problem was trying to get a plumber. "They said they had 25 to 30 calls prior to mine, and that was at a quarter till eight this morning," she said.

Temperatures fell as low as 23 degrees in Florida's citrus groves. Farmers rushed to spray a protective layer of water and ice, and picked juice oranges imperiled by ice crystals. Even freeze-damaged oranges can be used for juice if they get to the processing plant before they spoil.

Citrus growers said it will be several days before they know how much damage occurred. But they believe temperatures did not stay low enough long enough to cause serious losses to an industry that brings growers an estimated \$821 million and contributes \$8 billion to the state economy.

Among the victims of the weather, two boys, 8 and 11, died at hospitals in Tulsa, Okla. Gerar McClure and Brendon James had been pulled from the Arkansas River after falling through thin ice on Sunday.

Cold, ice and snow delayed funerals in Chattanooga. Families couldn't reach the Lane Funeral Home, graves could not be dug, suppliers were unable to deliver vaults and it was too cold for graveside-services.

Former employee sues tobacco company

■ **LAWSUIT:** An ex-Brown and Williamson Tobacco Corp. worker is charging the company invaded his privacy

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (AP) — A tobacco-industry whistleblower filed a lawsuit Monday against Brown & Williamson Tobacco Corp., accusing his former employer of invading his privacy by compiling and distributing reports on his past.

B&W, the nation's third-largest tobacco company, has sued former research chief Jeffrey Wigand for allegedly violating a confidentiality agreement.

Wigand's lawyer, Frank Doheny, said B&W's campaign to discredit his client includes pulling his credit card bills and interviewing relatives from a previous marriage.

"That's an invasion of privacy, and that's something no one should be subject to simply for testifying about the effects of tobacco or nicotine," Doheny said.

The B&W materials say Wigand was once arrested for shoplifting, has been accused of spousal abuse and falsified his resume.

The lawsuit seeks unspecified damages from B&W for subjecting Wigand to a "cruel and unjust hard-

ship." It was filed the day after CBS broadcast a "60 Minutes" interview with Wigand. The network had held the program since November, fearing a lawsuit.

On the program, Wigand said former company chairman Thomas Sandefur lied to Congress when he testified that he believed nicotine is not addictive. Wigand also said Sandefur rejected making safer cigarettes because it would put the company at "extreme exposure" with its other tobacco products.

He said he began carrying a handgun after receiving threatening telephone calls that warned, "Leave tobacco alone, or else you'll find your kids hurt." B&W denied any involvement.

"It's absurd to suggest that Brown & Williamson had anything to do with purported threats," said B&W lawyer Gordon Smith, who said B&W was considering filing a lawsuit against CBS over the broadcast Sunday.

Smith, speaking at a news conference in Louisville, Ky., where the company is based, called Wigand's statements "unsubstantiated allegations" and said Wigand testified under oath in January 1994 that he knew of no criminal or fraudulent behavior by B&W.

Inmates' escape foiled by fellow prisoner's razor

■ **PRISON:** Escapees' braided sheets were cut by prisoner left behind

DALLAS (AP) — Three killers had cut through a foot-thick jail-house wall and were climbing down a rope made from braided bedsheets when a fellow inmate — possibly angry about being left behind — slit their rope with a razor blade, and they tumbled to the ground.

One convict suffered broken vertebrae and was hospitalized. The others were treated for rope burns or cuts and returned to the Low Sterrett Justice Center.

"We found the razor blade near where they anchored the bed-sheet. It was a clean cut," sheriff's spokesman Jim Ewell said. Inmates are allowed to have the

blades to shave.

Investigators speculated that other prisoners were angry about not being included in Sunday's breakout or thought they would be blamed for the escape.

Investigators questioned inmates and guards Monday for clues about who cut the neatly braided sheets and why. Four other inmates shared the convicts' cellblock on the fifth floor.

One prisoner was near the top of the rope, one at the middle and one near the bottom. He said it was a miracle that the two highest on the rope survived.

The injured men, Russell Nichols, Ralph Hernandez and Michael Contreras, were discovered Sunday night, by a woman arriving at the jail to post bail for a prisoner. The temperature was in the 20s.

The men were wearing white coveralls and were yelling for help.

"One was so injured he couldn't stand up. We think they could have easily frozen to death within minutes if she hadn't seen them," Ewell said.

They were trapped in the courtyard by 15-foot walls topped with razor wire that had been added in the past three months at jails all over Dallas County. It was the first escape attempt since the jail opened in 1983.

All three men had recently been transferred from New Mexico and had made no previous escape attempts.

Nichols, 33, was the most seriously hurt. He and Hernandez, 31, and Contreras, 29, were all serving life sentences for unrelated murders.

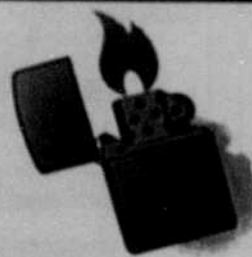
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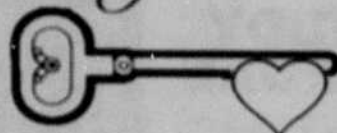
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