



A truck driver checks the road after nearly sliding his trailer into a couple of parked cars on NWillamette near Burlington in the St Johns neighborhood of North Portland,Thursday.

Slick and stranded

Drivers fetch cars stuck in snow

By GILLIAN FLACCUS
Associated Press

PORTLAND — Erick Daza braved a snow-covered suburban street Thursday to pick up his girlfriend’s car, one of many that got stuck in a winter storm that brought Oregon’s largest city to a halt.

The Portland area does not use rock salt for environmental reasons and because snow is so rare.

Some residents who were trapped in a treacherous, hourslong commute Wednesday evening pressed the city to consider using it occasionally to ease winter traffic woes. But the mayor defended Portland’s preparations.

The storm caught thousands off guard as they left work early to try to get home ahead of 1 to 3 inches of snow that brought traffic to a standstill for hours.

Cars fish-tailed, spun out and crashed. Semi-trucks littered Interstate 5, some of them unable to move out of lanes before getting stuck. Commuters told horror stories of spending six to eight hours in their cars, not moving.

Some drivers abandoned their vehicles and started walking, and many still dotted the streets the next day. Daza’s girlfriend’s car was among them.

“She was trying to go up the hill and she got stuck ... and some nice person gave her a ride home,” Daza said as he and a friend retrieved the vehicle. “We have snow chains, but she didn’t have them. We just didn’t expect this.”

In comparison, some places in the Northeast expected up to 2 feet of snow as temperatures plunged.

About 70 miles south of Portland, authorities said a man’s body was found covered by a thin layer of snow. A caller reported a stranger dead in his driveway, but there was no sign of foul play, Linn County Sheriff Bruce Riley said.

Back roads stayed slippery because of a layer of ice beneath the snow. Cars without snow chains or tires struggled to get around, and smaller roads saw almost no traffic.

On one steep street in the Portland suburb of Lake Oswego, the road was completely blocked by six damaged cars that were in a chain-reaction crash and then abandoned.

Even so, with no competition from cars, kids took their sleds to snow-slickened streets.

Kevin Baker of Lake Oswego watched his twins slide down a street and thought about the traffic nightmare a day earlier. His usual three- to four-hour commute from Seattle took eight hours.

He and others questioned about whether the city could have been more prepared.

“Right now they use gravel, but they have to do something more than what



Peter Wasak and daughter Michelle Wasak feed a parking meter that got turned sideways when a tree fell outside St. Mary’s Episcopal Church on Pearl St. during an ice storm that took hold in Eugene,Thursday.

Global warming’s fingerprints seen in 24 weird weather cases

By SETH BORENSTEIN
AP Science Writer

WASHINGTON — A new scientific report finds man-made climate change played some role in two dozen extreme weather events last year but not in a few other weird weather instances around the world.

An annual report released Thursday by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration found climate change was a factor, however small or large, in 24 of 30 strange weather events. They include 11 cases of high heat, as well as unusual winter sunshine in the United Kingdom, Alaskan wildfires and odd “sunny day” flooding in Miami.

The study documented climate change-goosed weather in Alaska, Washington state, the southeastern United States, Canada, Europe, Australia, China, Japan, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, the western north Pacific cyclone region, India, Pakistan, Egypt, Ethiopia and southern Africa.

“It has to be measureable. It has to be detectable. There has to be evidence for it and that’s what these papers do,” said NOAA scientist Stephanie Herring, co-editor of the report.

In six cases — including cold snaps in the United States and downpours in Nigeria and India — the scientists could not detect climate change’s effects. Other scientists, though, disputed that finding for the cold snap that hit the Northeast.

Herring highlighted the Miami flooding in September 2015. Because of rising sea levels and sinking land, extremely high tides flooded the streets with 22 inches of water.

“This one is just very remarkable because truly, not a cloud in the sky, and these types of tidal nuisance

they were doing last night, because it was unbearable,” Baker said.

Mayor Charlie Hales said people should not have assumed they would be able to drive home when snow was expected.

“I think the city was unprepared in the sense we don’t have a lot of practice as drivers around here in dealing with snow,” he told Portland news station KGW-TV. “Our crews, of course, were ready to go and did, and they’re still out there working these problems.”

On another Lake

Oswego street, Sarah Ehinger, who is originally from the Midwest and was out sledding with her two children, said she disagreed with residents criticizing the city for not using salt during a big storm.

“I enjoy a good snow day, so I say don’t plow and let Mother Nature do its work,” she said. “But I can see if you have to get to work, they have to do something.”

There were some scary moments. A school bus lost control on a hill Wednesday, ramming into the back of a truck that hit a car.

Two hours south of Portland, a car went into a pond in Eugene, but the driver got out safely. The next day, the city told drivers to use roads only if necessary. Ice encrusted downed power lines, while trees toppled onto cars and roadways.

Further south, California faced its own treacherous weather. One of the strongest rainstorms of the season unleashed several inches on the San Francisco Bay Area and triggered flash-flood warnings.

Southern California will get a soaking through Friday.

Second Malheur trial to move forward in Feb.

By CONRAD WILSON
Oregon Public Broadcasting

U.S. District Court Judge Anna Brown said the second trial for defendants who occupied the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge would move forward, as planned, with jury selection starting on Feb. 14.

“From my perspective, we’re going forward to trial,” Brown said, “unless good cause arises.”

Federal prosecutors asked Brown to delay the trial by 60 days. But the judge agreed with defense attorneys that wasn’t necessary.

The upcoming trial includes seven defendants: Jason Patrick, Duane Ehmer, Jake Ryan, Sean Anderson, Sandy Anderson, Darryl Thorn and Dylan Anderson. The felony charges include conspiring to prevent federal employees from doing their jobs at the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge and, for some, carrying a firearm in a federal facility.

Those are the same charges Ammon Bundy and other leaders of the occupation were acquitted of in October.

In a court memo filed

Monday, the government said it plans to bring Class B misdemeanors against Patrick and the other defendants, including trespassing, tampering with vehicles and equipment, and destruction of property.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Craig Gabriel said the government would officially file those additional charges no later than Monday, Dec. 19.

Misdemeanors were not part of the first trial.

Gabriel also said prosecutors would be bringing an additional felony charge against Ehmer, which they will present to a grand jury next week. Ehmer gained notoriety for riding his horse Hellboy around the refuge during the occupation while carrying an American flag.

Brown also denied Patrick’s motion to dismiss the case outright.

Brown said she plans to send out 1,000 jury summonses statewide. In the first Malheur trial the court sent out 1,500 summonses statewide.

The government said its case would take about a week and a half. The defense estimated its case would last around two and a half weeks.

BRIEFLY

Bloodied and demoralized Syrians evacuate Aleppo

BEIRUT (AP) — Weeping, hobbling on crutches or dragging suitcases, hundreds of survivors of a devastating government bombardment and siege left the last sliver of opposition-held Aleppo on Thursday, an evacuation that sealed the end of the rebellion’s most important stronghold and was a watershed moment in Syria’s 5-year-old civil war.

For the opposition, it was a humiliating defeat. A smiling President Bashar Assad called it a historic event comparable to the birth of Christ and the revelation of the Quran.

A U.N. official described it as “a black chapter in the history of international relations.”

Traumatized residents filtered out to green government buses on a chilly day through Aleppo’s streets lined with flattened buildings. Years of resistance were stamped out in a relentless campaign over the past month that saw hospitals bombed, bodies left unburied and civilians blown apart by shells as they fled for safety.

“We struggled for six years. We were supposed to be the ones to get them out, not them us,” said one tearful woman who held a baby, speaking in a video posted online by an opposition activist.

Under a surrender deal brokered by Russia and Turkey, tens of thousands of residents and rebel fighters are being evacuated to opposition-controlled areas in the surrounding countryside, a process likely to take several days.

They said it was too dangerous to go to government-held areas, where they faced potential retribution from security services alleged to carry out arrests and torture of opposition sympathizers. Many are of fighting age and don’t want to be drafted into the military.

White House officials suggest Putin was involved in U.S. hacking

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Obama administration suggested Thursday that Russian President Vladimir Putin personally authorized the hacking of Democratic officials’ email accounts in the run-up to the presidential election and said it was “fact” that such actions helped Donald Trump’s campaign. The White House also assailed Trump himself, saying he must have known of Russia’s interference.

No proof was offered for any of the accusations, the latest to unsettle America’s uneasy transition from eight years under Democratic President Barack Obama to a new Republican administration led by Trump. The claims of Russian meddling in the election also have heightened already debilitating tensions between Washington and Moscow over Syria, Ukraine and a host of other disagreements.

“Only Russia’s senior-most officials could have authorized these activities,” White House spokesman Josh Earnest said, repeating the words from an October U.S. intelligence assessment.

Obama’s deputy national security adviser, Ben Rhodes, connected the dots further, saying it was Putin who was responsible for the Russian government’s actions.

LEAD: Lawmakers may consider legislation to require testing

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Dec. 1 to submit invoices for reimbursement. They could make requests for tests conducted between March and Dec. 1. The money only covers the cost of collecting and testing water supplies. It doesn’t account for any expenses associated with mitigation of lead contamination.

The widespread testing followed widespread media coverage of a scandal in Portland Public Schools over lead in drinking water that went unreported.

In August, the state Board of Education — at the behest of Gov. Kate Brown — approved a rule that requires

school districts to submit a plan for testing for lead in water and other toxins in school environments and to report any results to the public. The rule doesn’t require actual testing.

Education and health authorities unveiled a database Dec. 7 that allows the public to look up lead test results.

Lawmakers have said they might consider legislation in 2017 that would require districts to test for lead in water.

New York recently enacted a law requiring schools to test for lead, report results to the public and develop a plan for reducing exposure to the toxin.