

Massive snowstorm grounds 1,500 flights and knocks out power in U.S.

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Madison, February 23 (RHC)-- Over 1,500 flights canceled as major winter storm produces historic snowfall in the United States. Powerful winter storms lashed the U.S. on Wednesday, with heavy snow snarling travel across wide areas, even as unusual warmth was expected in others.

Blizzards forecast to dump up to two feet (60 centimeters) of snow swept across a vast band of the country from the West Coast to the Great Lakes, grounding flights and knocking out power to tens of thousands.

Warnings of heavy snowfall were even issued for usually sunny areas near Los Angeles, as well as for more typical winter weather spots in the far north. Forecasters with the National Weather Service said two rounds of snow would wallop parts of Minnesota in a "historic winter storm (that) will likely lead to impossible travel."

"Heavy snow will combine with northeast wind gusts of 35 to 45 mph (55 to 70 kph)... This will lead to significant blowing and drifting snow with whiteout conditions in open areas. Some drifts may be several feet deep," a warning said.

"If you must travel, keep an extra flashlight, food, and water in your vehicle in case of an emergency. Travel should be restricted to emergencies only. If you must travel, have a winter survival kit with you. If you get stranded, stay with your vehicle."

More than 1,550 flights within, into or out of the United States had been cancelled by 0000 GMT Thursday, according to Flightaware.com, with its "Misery Map" showing Denver, Salt Lake City and Minneapolis-St Paul particularly badly hit.

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