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## **Hundreds of Deaths as Europe Struggles With Snow Amid an Intense Cold Snap**

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Extreme cold and heavy snow buried parts of Europe over the past few days, claiming the lives of hundreds of people, straining utilities in France, snarling transportation in Britain and leaving people in cities like Rome stymied.

Eastern Europe was particularly hard hit. Ukraine's Ministry of Emergencies reported that at least 131 people had died during a cold snap that has lasted more than a week in which night temperatures have dropped well below freezing. Hundreds have been treated for hypothermia or frostbite.

Many of the victims in Eastern Europe were homeless people. In Poland, the PAP news agency reported that Prime Minister Donald Tusk had asked local authorities to waive the ban on admitting inebriated people to homeless shelters after eight more people died, bringing the death toll from the storm to 53 in Poland.

The Bosnian government used helicopters to carry food and supplies to remote villages buried under six feet of snow. More than 10,000 people are trapped, Reuters reported. Rescuers saved dozens of people trapped in their cars from avalanches in eastern Bosnia. "There were 15, 20 cars trapped in snow for 20 hours," one rescue worker, Darko Rojic, told Reuters. "We barely managed to pull the people out and we are now flying them home with helicopters."

Sarajevo, the Bosnian capital, reported more than three feet of snow.

In Serbia, the government struggled to help 70,000 residents cut off by the snow.

At least 11 people died in Italy, and 5 in France, including a 12-year-old boy, according to news reports. The extreme cold also caused the death of at least three people in Hungary, the country's national news agency, MTI, said, and at least five people froze to death in Lithuania over the weekend.

As the bone-chilling cold set in, so did anxiety that EDF, Europe's biggest power generator, would be unable to keep up with the demand, but the utility tried to reassure homeowners that it was able to meet their needs, Bloomberg News reported.

In Switzerland, falling temperatures turned snow-covered cars into Seussian ice sculptures as some areas were engulfed in record-breaking frigid weather, according to the Swiss Federal Office of Meteorology and Climatology. Temperatures as low as 22 degrees below zero Celsius were reported in southern Switzerland.

In Italy, some regions were still without power on Sunday even after the snow had passed. Accounts of just how much fell in Rome varied, with some sources reporting no more than a few inches, and the mayor's office saying more than two feet.

Angry calls for the resignation of Rome's mayor, Gianni Alemanno, began after drivers spent hours gridlocked on the Italian capital's ring road and several main streets remained unplowed and unsalted.

Monuments like the Coliseum were closed on Sunday, and government offices are expected to stay shut on Monday. Despite assurances from the mayor on his official blog that 56 snow crews had been deployed, the city seemed to flail in weather of a ferocity it had last encountered in 1985.

Pope Benedict XVI appeared at his window in the Vatican wearing a dapper white overcoat for his weekly address to pilgrims in St. Peter's Square. "The snow is beautiful, but let's hope that spring comes soon," he said.

By many standards, London's snowfall was relatively light, three to six inches. Yet problems arose nonetheless. Still, officials seemed determined to avoid a repeat of the debacle of December 2010 when cold and a few inches of snow closed highways, brought 4,000 flights to a halt and snarled global air traffic.

About half of Sunday's 1,300 flights at Heathrow Airport near London were canceled, said Alexandra Blomley, a spokeswoman for BAA, the company that owns the airport, the result of a backlog created by the previous day's cancellations. The airport had canceled the flights based on forecasts before the snowfall, Ms. Blomley said, in an effort to avoid repeating past mistakes.

"Not as much snow fell as was thought," Ms. Blomley said. "Regardless, it's important to use the information you have, and that's exactly what they did."

Gatwick Airport, citing its recent investment of \$12.6 million to buy plows, snow blowers, de-icing agents and other equipment in the wake of the 2010 snowfall, reported only a few cancellations.

Londoners alternated between delighting in wintery scenes and railing against the frustration of snow-glutted streets and more than half of the Underground train lines delayed or suspended, according to Transport for London.

The Metropolitan Police put out an advisory urging people to avoid overnight travel during the weekend; accidents choked several major thoroughfares.

"It was pretty hairy, I saw a couple of crashes," said Owen Thomas, who commuted from London to Bristol at the height of the storm. "People just freak out in this weather. They either drive pretty slowly or they just drive normally and then they crash."

On Saturday night, in the historic Seven Dials area in London's West End, dozens of children spilling out from the new musical "Matilda" swept into the street for an impromptu snowball fight.

"Suddenly your walk home on Saturday night becomes this slightly epic voyage," said Mr. Thomas's sister, Orla Alexander, a magazine editor who lives in Islington. "It's much more difficult but much more fun, and everyone has a massive grin on their faces."

The next day the snow had stopped. On a bench in Victoria Park, in a snowy echo to the famed Mayfair bronzes of Franklin D. Roosevelt and Winston Churchill sitting on a bench, a life-size snow sculpture of a polar bear sat clutching a green frond.

"It lends this amazing playfulness to the whole city," Ms. Alexander said.