

# Winter Storm Kenan pummels US East Coast, leaving thousands without power and at least four dead

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At least four people are dead and thousands are without power in the northeast United States more than 24 hours after Winter Storm Kenan unleashed record snowfall, heavy winds and blizzard conditions.

Over the weekend, some 55 million people along the US East Coast were under a winter storm watch. On Saturday, the National Weather Service (NWS) identified that the storm had undergone a meteorological process called bombogenesis, more commonly referred to as a “bomb cyclone.”

The NWS further warned: “The combination of heavy snow rates and strong winds will produce dangerous blizzard conditions across portions of the Mid-Atlantic and New England coasts, from Virginia’s Eastern Shore to eastern Maine, where Blizzard Warnings are in effect. Travel in these areas will be nearly impossible today due to whiteout conditions.”

The nor’easter was boosted by warmer-than-average ocean temperatures off the eastern coast fueled by climate change, which aided in intensifying the storm, producing stronger winds and more precipitation than previous storms. Record snowfall was recorded in several states, including reports of over 30 inches of snow in Connecticut and Massachusetts. In Boston, nearly two feet of snow fell in less than 36 hours while below-freezing temperatures were recorded throughout south-central Florida, threatening fruit and vegetable crops.

In Nantucket, Massachusetts, the cyclone produced coastal flooding and wind gusts as high as 83 mph, compounding difficulties in restoring power. At least 115,000 people throughout New York and Massachusetts lost power on Saturday according to *PowerOutage.us*. As lows dropped to the teens and

single digits, with winds gusting over 35 miles per hour, the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency reported that as of Sunday evening, at least 16,000 people were still without power.

As of this writing, at least four people have died because of the storm, all of them from Long Island, New York. Robert Doroski, 77, died Saturday morning after slipping and falling into a swimming pool while he was trying to shovel snow, which deposited as much as two feet in the area according to local reports.

Two other men died in Syosset, Nassau County, in separate incidents on Saturday. Syosset Fire Department first responders were unable to revive a 75-year-old man who collapsed outside as he was shoveling. Later that day, a 53-year-old man was found outside his home unresponsive, with a shovel lying beside him.

A 2011 study observing injuries and medical emergencies associated with shoveling snow found that the activity was responsible for about 11,500 injuries a year, roughly 100 of which are fatal. Research published in the *Canadian Medical Association Journal* shows an increase in the chances of injury and death with an increase in snowfall and duration.

Reporting on the findings, the *Washington Post* noted that “after snowfalls of more than eight inches, hospital admissions were 16 percent greater than on snow-free days, and 34 percent more deaths were recorded from heart attacks.”

The fourth reported death was an elderly woman who was found in a hotel parking lot in Uniondale, New York, by a snowplow driver. Nassau County executive Bruce Blakeman told *NBC New York* that while an official cause of death has yet to be determined, it

appears the woman suffered a medical emergency and due to the blizzard conditions, was unable to get to a hospital.

Even prior to this weekend's storm, frigid winter temperatures apparently claimed the life of Tyler Lopresti-Castro, a 20-year-old student at the State University of New York (SUNY) Oneonta.

Lopresti-Castro was found lying outside a City of Oneonta bus garage on the pavement by employees shortly before 7 a.m. in what Oneonta Police are saying is a "cold weather-related" incident. According to the NWS, it was -14 degrees Fahrenheit when Lopresti-Castro was found lying on the pavement in jeans and a sweatshirt.

Wednesday was the first day of classes for students returning to SUNY Oneonta from their winter break. A member of the 2019-2020 track team, Lopresti-Castro was a junior who was working toward a degree in accounting.

While the capitalist press presents the question of deaths from weather or exposure as "natural events" or tragic accidents, nothing could be further from the truth. These deaths are the result of the capitalist system's subordination of all aspects of society to the further enrichment of a tiny few.

Just as it is more profitable for the ruling class to let the coronavirus rip through the population, killing more than 900,000 in the US so far, money and resources that should be spent on safeguarding infrastructure from the effects of climate change and protecting the population from predictable weather events are instead funneled into, and wasted on, the financial oligarchy.

While 10 individuals increased their net worth by \$500 billion in 2021, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) released data last month showing that at least 688 people died in major weather and climate disasters in the continental US. This figure is a drastic undercount, as the NOAA's figure only includes events that caused more than \$1 billion in damages.

As a report from *BuzzFeed News* makes clear, though, even the 688 figure is not accurate. While the NOAA claimed only 688 people died from all major 2021 climate-related disasters, *BuzzFeed's* analysis showed that last year's winter storm in Texas, which knocked out power for millions of Texans, alone resulted in 755 excess deaths. Presented with the

figures from *BuzzFeed*, the NOAA acknowledged that there may be "hundreds of additional deaths."



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