

Residents of California's San Bernardino County trapped by snow for days with no help

Joshua Rodriguez
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As a series of severe winter storms have made their way across America, residents in San Bernardino County—the largest county by area in California, 60 miles east of downtown Los Angeles—continue to face dire conditions as a flurry of cold weather and blizzards has brought monumental amounts of snow, trapping many residents in their homes and without road access for more than a week.

The late-winter onslaught of icy and snowy weather across North America has killed an estimated 22 people across the US and has displaced and endangered many, knocking out power for days on end in the Detroit Metro region.

The influx of several feet of snow within such a short period of time has led to power outages and gas explosions around the San Bernardino County area, leaving some residents with no means to heat their homes or cook food amid sub-freezing temperatures.

Residents have been forced to either bear the cold on their own, or spend a considerable amount of money to stay at a hotel.

Many have reported that the sheer weight of the snow itself is causing roofs to cave in, flattening vehicles, homes and property in the process, as well as causing trees to fall onto roads, power lines and houses.

“The weight of the snow is very scary on the roofs,” Carolyn Lehouillier, a Crestline resident, told KTLA 5 News. “There’s a couple houses that trees have fallen into; they’re just down, like the whole house is knocked down.”

The influx of snow has also frozen pipes in the area, closing off one of the very few means of transporting potable water and sewer-waste materials to and from houses.

With the only roads available being inundated with snow, families are unable to travel to the store to buy necessities such as food, bottled water and medicine, and those who have been able to dig themselves out have found mostly empty store shelves.

Making matters worse, Goodwin and Sons Market, the town of Crestline’s only grocery store, collapsed under the immense weight of the snow on its rooftop, destroying any

food that may have aided a community of more than 10,000 people in dire need.

“Where is the National Guard? They’re supposed to come up here and help,” Tamarin Knowland, a Lake Arrowhead resident, told KCAL News. “They flew helicopters around here, that’s all I ever saw. They said they were going to come in with snowmobiles and deliver stuff to people, medications and food. I haven’t seen any of that.”

Knowland, who depends on medicine to keep one of her dogs alive, has not been able to receive her scheduled medicine delivery due to the weather.

Other residents, such as Lake Arrowhead resident Courtland Van Odin, are concerned for at-risk family members who may be too sick or too old to care for themselves or seek medical attention in the case of an emergency.

“I have an 89-year-old mother-in-law who is my main concern, my primary concern,” Van Odin told KTLA. “If something were to happen, a tree falls down or something, there’s just no way out.”

So far, authorities claim it will take another week to get to all residents in need, but for some, help is urgently needed right now.

The danger that these residents face is growing more dire by the minute, and the news of more snow coming this week could push families to the brink of cold and starvation and possibly even death.

As the government response lags far behind in terms of progress preparedness, many residents are voicing frustration over the lack of information or direction.

Jaime Moreno, who lives in Crestline, also spoke with KTLA. “It’s just been madness. It’s just been very frustrating,” he said. “No answers at all, and the California Highway Patrol has given no answers and not helping out and just saying that it’s all up to their supervisors.”

Erica Elson, another resident of Crestline, told KTLA, “People are absolutely scared. We’re getting our news from walking down the street and just talking to each other. A lot of people haven’t been able to charge their phones, they

don't have the internet, people are telling me that they're just trying to get out any way that they can," she said. "People feel like they have been abandoned."

"It's dire up here. We are just waiting for people to die up here," Joe Weaver, a resident of Lake Arrowhead, told the *San Bernardino Sun*. "We can't rely on the federal government, the state government, or the county. It's just the residents up here are banding together to help each other out."

As is usual, major news organizations have repeated the claim that this winter surge is "unprecedented and historic," as if the massive snowfall in the San Bernardino Mountains had not been predicted by meteorologists days ahead of time. Little was done by government officials to evacuate residents or provide aid ahead of time.

Scientists have been warning for decades that human-caused climate change could create more severe weather events across the world and of the catastrophic consequences for people if the issue of climate change is not addressed or prepared for.

Scientists have warned about the "sharpening" of storms, resulting in higher precipitation in the center and less on the edges. As Ruby Leung, a climate scientist at the US Pacific Northwest National Lab, explained, "The western United States and California, in particular, are expected to get higher increases in peak rain and snowfall compared to the South and Northwest regions."

California, which is home to 178 billionaires, has the capital and resources to effectively respond to the issues associated with climate change and assist those impacted. However, any and all considerations for human safety and well-being are subordinated to the interests of private profit. While hundreds of billions of dollars are allocated to military preparations for a world war, the claim is made that there is simply no money or resources to respond to the predictable increase of severe weather events.

It is notable that Governor Gavin Newsom, a Democrat, declared a state of emergency in response to the influx of snow at around the same time that he ended the state of emergency in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Similar to the COVID-19 state of emergency issued on March 4, 2020, the current state of emergency for the areas impacted by the storms came too late and offers only token assistance to those afflicted by the crisis.

Just as hospital systems came under immense strain and complete breakdown with the onset of the pandemic, California's emergency response system along with key infrastructure such as energy and gas have been strained under the impact of the storm.

All across the country, the capitalist class has slashed social services to the point where social infrastructure and

emergency preparedness have been stripped of any meaningful use. The onset of the pandemic in 2020 was seized upon by the ruling elite to provide trillions in bailout money to the corporations and banks.

Three years later, as tensions around the war in Ukraine continue to intensify, more cuts in social spending to keep up with wartime production and preparations for war with Russia and China are being demanded by capitalist governments and drafted into budgets for the next fiscal year.

The outcome of these economic decisions has been predictable. As climate disasters increase in size, frequency and severity, the ruling class will devote trillions to waging imperialist war and further enriching the wealthy while the working class is left to fend for itself.

The disaster unfolding in San Bernardino County is not an isolated phenomenon, but is a symptom of the global capitalist system in deep crisis.

The horrific disaster unfolding with the earthquake in Turkey and Syria is a case in point: Measures that would have saved tens of thousands of lives were not taken despite the warnings of scientists. Similarly, the train derailment in Greece and the environmental catastrophe in East Palestine, Ohio expose the capitalist system as indifferent to human life and suffering.

The snowstorm ravaging San Bernardino is a byproduct of the state's reckless budget cutting, which has placed thousands of lives in danger. However, no local, regional or even national measure can resolve the climate crisis, which is a global phenomenon.

Only the working class, in a coordinated, international effort based on science, can create the conditions in which climate change can be addressed and human lives saved.



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