

Powerful storm batters Europe: Two killed in Netherlands, one in Belgium; parts of Romania, Germany

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While schools remained closed in Germany, Belgium shut down its port in Ghent to prepare for a winter storm coming in from the west and bring heavy snow, rain and gusty winds.

Gale-force winds gusting at up to 70 mph (110 kph) have been recorded in Britain, where thousands of homes in southeast England have been left without electricity.

In Scotland, the driving conditions are reportedly extremely hazardous, with officials advising motorists to stay off the roads because of blustery winds, heavy snow and icy conditions.

Here are the LIVE updates on the winter storm in Europe :

07:00 pm: Belgium: The storm lashing across western Europe has killed one person in Belgium and overwhelmed emergency response centers through much of the nation. A driver was killed when a tree collapsed onto her car south of Brussels early Thursday and some were injured by flying debris in the rest of Belgium as the storm picked up in intensity during the day.

The Thalys international train connections suffered long delays because of the high winds between Paris and Amsterdam. At least two people were killed in the Netherlands.

06:30 pm: Netherlands: Dutch police say at least two people have been killed in separate wind-related incidents as a powerful storm lashes the Netherlands.

Police in the eastern province of Overijssel say in a tweet that a 62-year-old man died Thursday after being hit in the face by a falling tree branch. They say another 62-year-old man died in the eastern city of Enschede after a falling tree hit his car.

In the central town of Vuren, a 66-year-old man died after falling several meters (yards). Police are investigating the cause, including whether the storm was to blame.

06:00 pm: Romania: Snowstorms and high winds left dozens of schools, several main roads and ports closed in parts of Romania and thousands of people without electricity.

Interior Minister Carmen Dan said Thursday that about 32,000 people had no power in 13 counties across Romania. She said several roads were preventively closed overnight in southwest and southern Romania.

Authorities freed a bus carrying 22 people that was stranded in snowdrifts in the Galati region in eastern Romania.

Snow also blanketed parts of northeastern Romania where thousands were left without power after high winds knocked down cables.

Chief traffic official Catalin Bocai told Antena 3 that Black Sea ports in eastern Romania were closed Thursday because of high winds.

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04:30 pm: Germany: German Railways has canceled all train services for the country's most populous state of North Rhine-Westphalia in as a winter storm moved to Germany from western Europe.

The square in front of Cologne's cathedral was also partially cordoned off Thursday as a precaution in case of stones falling because of gusty winds.

04:00 pm: Netherlands: Amsterdam's Schiphol Airport has suspended all flights and the Dutch national rail service halted all trains as a powerful storm lashes the Netherlands, toppling trees and blowing over tractor trailers, and causing traffic chaos.

Schiphol tweeted shortly after 11 am (local time) that it was halting all takeoffs and landings "until further notice" because of the severe weather conditions. Flag carrier KLM already had scrapped more than 200 flights before the storm.

National broadcaster NOS reported that the main railway station in The Hague was closed because of fears that parts of its new glass roof would be blown off by Thursday's storm.

The Royal Netherlands Meteorological Institute issued a Code Red, the most severe weather warning, for large parts of the country and said wind gusts reached 140 kph (87 mph) in the southern port of Hook of Holland.

Trains were also taking a battering, with many delays and cancelations, including between the towns of Gouda and Alphen aan den Rijn due to what the national rail service called a collision between a train and a trampoline. The service had no further details of the collision. There were no reports of injuries.

03:00 pm: United Kingdom: The wind has damaged some of the overhead power lines that supply trains and brought trees crashing onto the tracks, causing severe delays for thousands of commuters. Some service to London's King's Cross station has been disrupted.

Driving conditions in parts of Scotland are extremely hazardous, with officials advising motorists to stay off the roads because of blustery winds, heavy snow and icy conditions.

Officials at the Met Office forecasting service said the strong winds started to subside Thursday morning. Spokesman

Charlie Powell said that “In the last couple of hours the wind speeds have already started to come down significantly.”

02:00 pm: Belgium: The port of Ghent has been closed because of the high winds. Belgium set of its code orange alert “the second highest storm warning” for the north of the country early Thursday and tram traffic had to be halted in parts of the capital Brussels, where several public parks had to be closed.

Trees were uprooted in several cities. Traffic at the international airport of Zaventem was largely uninterrupted.

A woman fights with her colorful umbrella as she walks in the city center of Frankfurt, Germany, on a stormy Thursday, Jan. 18, 2018. Heavy storms are forecasted for most parts of Germany on Thursday

01:00 pm: Germany: German news agency dpa reported that police said that there were crashes “every other minute” on highways between Wilhelmshaven and Westerstede in northern Germany.

Firefighters and police responded late Wednesday to numerous car crashes in northern and southern Germany because of heavy snowfall and slippery roads.

Authorities warned Germans, especially in western and northern Germany, to not leave their homes on Thursday if possible.

German Railways said on its website that many trains would decrease their speed because of the storm and that delays are expected.

- (With inputs from AP)