

Round one over, but Winter Storm Fern still packing a punch

By Ty Tagami
Capitol Beat News Service

Most of Georgia dodged the punches of the winter storm that has been pummeling the nation, but state emergency officials warned Sunday afternoon that it is not over yet.

"Although we have had a lull in the storm this morning, we are still expecting another round of freezing rain in northeast Georgia this afternoon," state emergency management director Josh Lamb said.

Winter Storm Fern was expected to dump more rain as temperatures drop below freezing across northern parts of the state, raising the likelihood of treacherous road conditions Monday and more downed trees and power lines.

As of Sunday afternoon, there were about 80,000 power outages, mostly in metro Atlanta and the northeast corner of the state, concentrated in a wedge fanning out east and south from Ga. 400 to I-20.

Transportation work-

ers have treated 18,000 miles of roadway with 1.5 million gallons of brine and 2,500 tons of salt and rock fragments. Traffic volume was down 70% to 80% from a typical Sunday.

Even so, a couple dozen state routes were closed at some point during the storm, and there had been 25 crashes by Sunday afternoon, including one involving a brine truck.

Col. Billy Hitchens of the state Department of Public Safety urged those who take to the

roads to drive at an "appropriate" speed, which may be below the posted limit, and to leave more space than normal between themselves and other vehicles.

Gov. Brian Kemp authorized the use of 500 members of the National Guard, but so far Maj. Gen. Dwayne Wilson said he had deployed only about 120 of them. They are primarily helping to clear roads for first responders and power crews, mostly in Ray-bun, Stephens and White counties, he said.

In many areas, temperatures are forecast to remain above freezing into Sunday night before dropping below 32 degrees in the early morning. That would leave the rain less time to freeze onto limbs, making trees top heavy.

But the wet ground combined with high winds can still increase the risk of power outages.

"You can still see downed trees and power lines this evening because the ground is saturated, and we have the winds

gusting 20 to 30 miles per hour," said Will Lanxton, the state meteorologist. "It doesn't take that much wind to down trees and power lines, but any areas that do see ice accumulations this evening and tonight are much more likely to see those downed power lines."

As for Monday's commute, Lamb urged people to stay home. Anyone who feels they must drive should carefully assess the road conditions in their area, he said. "But the best thing to do is stay off of it."

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The Miracle of Life...and Death

Anyone who has taken more than a moment to think about life, and specifically how our lives, indeed our bodies, come to exist, cannot but be amazed. That a single sperm and egg can somehow grow into a human being which will become conscious through the living matter in its nervous system never ceases to amaze me. And that women can grow and nurture this being in and through their bodies is another miracle that calls for sublime awe, not to mention that life in all its various forms can perpetuate itself. What we sometimes overlook when contemplating the miracle of life is the miracle of death. That is, how is it that something which once was animated becomes inanimate in death? The physical, scientific explanation goes part of the way towards describing what happens, i.e., the heart and lungs and the whole cardio-pulmonary apparatus ceases to deliver oxygen-rich blood to the various parts of the body, which then cease to function. But on a spiritual level, a being which was endowed with a mind, and a spirit, dare we say an animal with a soul, is now giving this up and their soul is preparing to meet its God. The thing to contemplate here is not the physical event, but rather the spiritual event. And to be honest, no one really knows what this event will be like, which is why all living beings tremble in fear in the face of death.
—Christopher Simon

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