

Beat: Health

New York governor declares emergency over snow storm

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USPA News - New York Governor Andrew Cuomo declared a state of emergency Tuesday as a severe winter storm continued to intensify, with freezing cold and snowfall accumulations expected to reach up to 6 feet (1.8 meter) in the Buffalo metropolitan area. Cuomo issued an executive order declaring a state of emergency for the counties of Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Erie, Franklin, Genesee, Herkimer, Jefferson, Lewis, Oswego, Wyoming, and contiguous counties.

He also deployed the National Guard to affected areas earlier in the day and activated statewide Emergency Operations Centers. "New York is experiencing yet another severe winter storm, and I am declaring a State of Emergency in counties that have been or will be affected to help communities as they experience a substantial amount of snowfall," Cuomo said. "This storm may persist until Friday morning with the potential for another two feet (60.9 centimeters) of snow. New Yorkers in these areas should exercise extreme caution and stay off the roads until conditions are clearer and safer." The emergency declaration allows critical resources to be mobilized to assist local governments and allows laws and regulations that would otherwise impede their response to be suspended. Among the resources being called in are 526 plows, 74 large loaders, 1,247 operators and supervisors, 17 large snow blowers, and 4 truck-mounted snow blowers. Nearly 10,000 New Yorkers were without power Tuesday night as the winter storm continued to intensify. The National Weather Service (NWS) said just after 8 p.m. local time that more than 60 inches (152.4 centimeters) of snow had already been recorded just southeast of Lancaster in Erie County. But there were extreme differences in snowfall across the region as forecasters reported only 3.9 inches (9.9 centimeters) of snow just 6 miles (9.6 kilometers) northwest of Lancaster. Much of the region remained under a lake effect snow warning as the snowfall continued. Storm totals are expected to reach 3 to 4 feet (91.4 to 121 centimeters) in many areas along and south of a line from South Buffalo to Batavia, while local amounts are forecast to reach 5 to 6 feet (152.4 to 182.8 centimeters) from Lackawanna to Lancaster and Elma. "These storms are predicted to produce blizzard-like conditions, snowfall amounts of more than 3 feet (91.4 centimeters), with some areas forecast to receive more than 6 feet (182.8 centimeters) of snow, and dangerously cold temperatures," Cuomo said in the executive order. "These conditions may cause widespread power outages and roadway closures, damage to houses and businesses and public and private property, and will continue to pose a threat to the public health and safety." Some towns in the state, including the towns of Le Roy, Alexander, Bethany, and Pembroke, issued travel bans that prohibit all travel except that of emergency services.

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