

Preliminary Impact Assessment from January 2009 Ice Storm

Stuart Foster, State Climatologist for Kentucky

Note: Information compiled below is from a sampling of press reports from online newspapers around Kentucky and from other websites, included the Kentucky Public Service Commission and the Tennessee Valley Authority.

- General information
 - President Barack Obama approved Governor Steve Beshear's request for an emergency Presidential Disaster Declaration on Wednesday, January 28, 2009. As of Thursday, January 29, 2009, a total of 78 counties (out of 120) and 47 cities have declared emergencies.
 - Preliminary precipitation totals for Jan 26-28 from the Kentucky Mesonet indicated totals from 3 to 5+ inches of liquid precipitation were common throughout most of the state.
- Power outages
 - A total of more than 607,000 customers were without power (based on information from utilities regulated by the Kentucky Public Service Commission) as of noon EST on January 29, 2009. This is the largest outage ever reported in Kentucky, exceeding the previous record set on September 14, 2008 in the aftermath of Hurricane Ike.
 - Electric distributors affiliated with Tennessee Valley Authority reported more than 104,000 customers still without power as of 4:00 p.m. EST on January 29, 2009. The maximum number of customer outages is currently unknown.
 - Figures are currently not available for some municipal electric utilities that do not report to the Kentucky Public Service Commission.
 - Damage assessments were delayed in western Kentucky, but reports indicate significant damage to electric transmission lines, including a major tower along the line from Big Rivers Electric Corporation's Lake Barkley generation plant and a stretch of Kentucky Utility transmission line with 30 poles down. (Ryan Alessi and Greg Kocher, "Power restoration going slowly; about 547,000 customers powerless," Lexington Herald-Leader, Friday, January 30, 2009)
- Flooding
 - Minor flooding was reported on the Red River near Clay City and Stanton in Powell County.
 - Minor flooding was reported on the Kentucky River near Ravenna in Estill County.
 - Minor flooding was reported in the Green River basin.
- Fatalities
 - A total of 7 fatalities related to the storm have been reported as of January 30, 2009. Information regarding 4 of these is available below:
 - Christian County man, age 76 – carbon monoxide poisoning suspected

- Owen County man, age 47 – carbon monoxide poisoning suspected
 - Harrison County couple, ages 64 and 62 – carbon monoxide poisoning suspected
- Communications outages
 - AT&T suffered major, widespread communications outages, primarily in western Kentucky due to a combination of fiber-optic cable cuts and power outages.
- Water outages
 - Approximately 93,000 customers on 55 water systems without water due to power outages and storm damage as of January 29, 2009.
- School closings
 - K-12 throughout much of Kentucky closed for 3-4 days, most colleges and universities were closed for at least one day
- Business and industry closings
 - The mayor pro tem and city manager of Danville requested that all Boyle County industries close temporarily to conserve water.
 - The Toyota plant (the largest manufacturing facility in Kentucky) located in Georgetown halted production of vehicles during the 2nd shift on January 27 and all of January 28, 2009.
- Temporary shelter
 - 113 emergency shelters have been opened statewide.
 - Hotels, suffering from the poor economy and a normally slow time of year for business, were filled to capacity in communities throughout much of the state.
- Fires
 - House fire in Ashland was started when a downed tree fell on a power line.

Update on Impacts from January 2009 Ice Storm

Stuart Foster, State Climatologist for Kentucky

Note: Information compiled below is from the National Weather Service, a sampling of press reports from online newspapers around Kentucky and from other websites, included the Kentucky Public Service Commission and the Tennessee Valley Authority.

The ice storm began in the evening hours of January 26th and continued through the 28th. Areas of northern Kentucky received up to an estimated 6 inches of snow. Ice accumulation estimated at 1 inch was widespread. Ice accumulations were greatest along an axis roughly corresponding to the Western Kentucky Parkway stretching from near Paducah to Lexington. Ice accumulations were less east of Bowling Green, and southeastern Kentucky did not receive ice accumulation. Liquid precipitation amounts ranged from about 2.5 to more than 5 inches, which heavier amounts in the south. Heavy precipitation combined with runoff has contributed to minor flooding in some areas.

Through January 31st, at least 91 of Kentucky's 120 counties, along with at least 69 cities had declared emergencies. More than 700,000 customers were without electricity, though power is slowly being restored. At least 58 water systems, primarily in western and central areas of Kentucky were not operating due to power outages, and more than 200,000 customers were either without water or under a boil water advisory. At least 172 shelters were open, housing at least 6,400 people. Hotels were filled to capacity, and officials in some areas were encouraging people to pack up and leave. As many as 11 fatalities had been attributed to the storm, and this number is expected to rise. Several fatalities have been attributed to carbon monoxide poisoning. The Kentucky National Guard is fully deployed with 4,600 troops. House-to-house searches are underway in many areas to check on residents.

Numerous businesses, schools, government offices, and services have been closed. Schools in the hardest hit areas have been closed since the 27th of January, and it is not known when some will reopen. Garbage collection was halted and landfills temporarily closed. While many businesses have been closed, hotels and restaurants, along with stores selling hardware, food, and other supplies have done robust business.