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Storm dumping heavy snow throughout the Northeast from Washington to New York

By Associated Press, 2/7/2003 10:55

A fast-moving snowstorm that built in power during the night swept into the Northeast on Friday, surprising commuters who had to grapple with slippery roads but delighting schoolchildren who got the day off.

Several inches were on the ground from northern Virginia to New York, and forecasters warned that some areas could get up to 9 inches.

Thousands of salt spreaders and snowplows were trying to keep ahead of the mess.

The weather forced dozens of flight cancellations across the region. In the New York area, LaGuardia Airport reported 40 to 50 cancellations from 6 a.m. onward, while Newark (N.J.) Liberty International Airport reported 93 cancellations.

In Virginia, at least 32 flights were canceled at Reagan National. At Washington Dulles International Airport, one runway was closed.

The New York metropolitan area expected 4 to 6 inches of snow before the storm ended in the afternoon. The city deployed 350 salt spreaders ahead of the morning rush.

New Jersey also had several inches on the ground, especially in central and southern areas, where as much as 8 inches was expected.

"I'm pretty sick of this," said Paula Crowley of Ocean Grove, N.J., who had to spend 25 minutes brushing 4 inches of snow off her car.

"The roads were not plowed at all," she said. "It was really slippery. I think people got spoiled the last few years when we didn't have bad winters."

In Philadelphia, all public and private schools were closed and many city offices shut down for the day. Six to 8 inches of snow were expected around Philadelphia by Monday afternoon. Plowing and salting could not keep up with the heavy fall, and accidents were reported on several major roads.

In Maryland, more than 2,000 plows and salt trucks worked statewide to clear at least one lane of the interstates and major thoroughfares, said state highway spokeswoman Kellie Boulware.

"We have everything out," said Boulware, whose department watched as predictions escalated from 6 to 9 inches of snow by late Friday.

In Manhattan's Central Park, 30 women staged an anti-war protest Friday morning by shedding their clothes and lying down in the snow, arranging themselves so that their bodies spelled out the words "No Bush."

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"This was exhilarating," declared Heidi Cuppari, 29, owner of a Manhattan pet supply company. "I was thinking about all the people who are going to be in war in hellish situations and I thought I could take a little snow."

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