**Article from The Guardian**

***Beast from the East meets storm Emma, causing UK's worst weather in years***

**Snow chaos causes deaths, disrupts travel and closes schools and hospitals across the UK as Met Office issues red alert.**

Blizzards, strong winds, drifting snow and bitter cold have caused death and disruption as the weather system nicknamed the “Beast from the East” combined with storm Emma to create some of the most testing weather experienced in the UK for years.

The Met Office issued a red warning – its most severe alert – on Thursday as temperatures plunged and up to 50cm (20in) of snow fell on high ground. Forecasters said the harsh conditions could continue in some places into next week.

Thousands of schools were closed across the UK and hospital operations were cancelled.

On Thursday night, thousands of drivers, who ignored warnings not to go out, or had no option but to brave the snow and ice, were left stranded on roads across the UK in freezing temperatures.

Emergency services, battling to clear heavy snow as well as vehicles that had broken down or crashed, urged people to heed travel advice, with Cumbria police saying that those choosing to travel despite the warnings were putting both themselves and their rescuers in danger. Many rail and air travellers also endured delays and cancellations.

In Looe, Cornwall, a seven-year-old girl died after a car crashed into a house. The child, believed to have been a passing pedestrian, died at the scene.

A 75-year-old woman was found dead in a snowy street in Leeds and a 46-year-old van driver died after a collision involving a lorry and a van in Hampshire.

Two teenage boys were taken to hospital after they were trapped under a fallen tree in Blackley, Manchester. Firefighters used a chainsaw and cutting gear to release the pair, who suffered serious but not life-threatening injuries.

The Metropolitan police named a man who died after being pulled from the water at Danson Park in south-east London on Wednesday as Stephen Cavanagh, 60.

The red warning covered parts of Devon, Somerset and south Wales and prompted Devon and Cornwall police to declare a major incident.

It was only the third such warning the Met Office has issued since the current system came into force in 2011. The red warning means: “Widespread damage, travel and power disruption and risk to life is likely”.

Storm Emma, named by the Portuguese weather service, pushed up from the south bringing heavy snow and gusts of more than 60mph.

The Met Office also warned of the possibility of the relatively rare phenomenon of freezing rain. This starts as snow, ice, or hail, then melts as it falls through a layer of relatively warmer air before encountering a layer of colder air near the ground. The rain droplets become “supercooled” and are below freezing on impact on surfaces such as roads, pavements and power cables.

Flood warnings have been issued by the Environment Agency for parts of Cornwall’s south coast on Friday morning. Residents have been told to expect tides to be around 400mm higher than predicted due to weather conditions, and that this is set to make the already hazardous conditions on coastal roads even worse.

In Lincolnshire, authorities were so overrun with snow-related emergencies they called in the armed forces. Ten RAF vehicles and their crews transported doctors and stranded patients after local police admitted they were struggling to cope.

In Edinburgh soldiers were deployed on Thursday night to help transport about 200 NHS clinical and support staff to and from Western general hospital and Edinburgh royal infirmary.

Though a red warning for part of Scotland was lifted, some motorists remained [stranded on the M80 near Glasgow](https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2018/feb/28/red-alert-as-extreme-weather-claims-life-of-man-in-freezing-water) for much of Thursday, some having been there since Wednesday. Rest centres were being opened in Devon, with motorists expected to be stranded overnight near Exeter.

Nearly all train operators warned of cancellations and disruption and hundreds of flights were cancelled. To add to the misery, many householders faced power cuts.

Some NHS staff were praised for battling into work. One cancer surgeon walked for two hours 50 minutes to operate on a patient.

But the Scottish Trades Union Congress was inundated with complaints from workers who said they had been forced to work in dangerous conditions.

The weather is costing the UK millions. The AA estimated that there were 8,260 collisions on Britain’s roads from the snow chaos in just three days, with the insurance cost already above £10m. Major shopping centres and businesses closed early.

Some supermarkets saw a rush of customers. There were reports of shelves being stripped of bread, milk and soup.

The bad weather also hit democracy. Business at the Scottish parliament was halted early, as was the Welsh assembly, which was forced to cancel St David’s Day celebrations. Sporting events will be affected across the weekend including the Newport half marathon, which was due to take place Sunday but has been cancelled.

There were also numerous examples of good deeds. Many 4x4 drivers volunteered to ferry around health workers or get supplies to people who were stranded.

The guesthouse Ally’s Retreat in Newquay, Cornwall, offered a bed to any homeless person who needed it. Two nightclubs in south Wales opened up for rough sleepers.

There was joy for tens of thousands of children who had an unexpected day off school and took to the slopes on sledges. Team GB’s Billy Morgan, just back from Pyeongchang with a Winter Olympics bronze medal, took to the streets of Essex to perform tricks and spins.

And a baby born on the A66 near Stockton-on-Tees in County Durham was doing well. Sienna Waring was delivered by her father, Andrew, as he tried to get her mother, Daniella, to hospital in terrible driving conditions.