

Deadly polar vortex freezes mid-America

2nd February, 2019



Much of mid- and northeastern America is in the middle of a deadly cold snap. Many states from Michigan in the north to Georgia in the south are experiencing freezing

temperatures not experienced for decades. It is currently colder in many parts of the USA than it is in Antarctica. The cold spell is because of what is called a polar vortex. This is a swirling mass of air and wind that has come down from the Arctic, which is where the North Pole is. The government has declared states of emergency in Wisconsin, Illinois and Michigan. Many schools and businesses have been closed due to the extreme cold. People have been warned not to travel, and even not to go outside and breathe in the icy air.

The weather website AccuWeather said that the temperature in Thief River Falls, in the state of Minnesota, dropped to a real-feel minus sixty degrees Celsius. Many parts of the Chicago River turned to ice, Niagara Falls turned into a winter wonderland and parts of Lake Michigan froze over. The bitter freeze is believed to be responsible for the deaths of at least eight people so far. Health officials are urging people to go outside only if it is absolutely necessary. They warned that exposing the skin to the freezing air was dangerous. It could lead to frostbite or breathing problems. People were also urged to be careful when shoveling snow outside and be careful of blocks of snow and ice falling from the roof.

Sources: nytimes.com / thehill.com / accuweather.com

Writing

Freezing cold weather is better than boiling hot weather. Discuss.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

cold snap / north / freezing / decades / Antarctica / polar / emergency / travel / extreme / breathe / winter / wonderland / temperature / ice / frostbite / snow / the roof

True / False

- The article said a deadly cold snap has hit the whole of the USA. T / F
- The last time the USA had such freezing weather was five years ago. T / F
- The polar vortex has come down from the North Pole. T / F
- People were told that breathing icy air is very healthy. T / F
- The real-feel temperature in a part of Minnesota fell to -60° Celsius. T / F
- Parts of Lake Michigan became frozen. T / F
- Freezing air cannot damage our skin. T / F
- Officials warned people about blocks of ice falling from roofs. T / F

Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

- | | |
|-----------------------|----------------|
| 1. much | a. fell |
| 2. deadly | b. revolving |
| 3. experienced | c. because of |
| 4. swirling | d. dropping |
| 5. due to | e. lethal |
| 6. dropped | f. encouraging |
| 7. parts | g. a lot of |
| 8. urging | h. unavoidable |
| 9. necessary | i. encountered |
| 10. falling | j. areas |

Discussion – Student A

- What do you think of freezing cold weather?
- What are the good and bad things about the weather in your country?
- What would it be like to visit Antarctica?
- What is the coldest you have ever been?
- What do you know about the North Pole?
- What are the dangers of very cold weather?
- What is the best way to stay warm in freezing temperatures?
- What would it be like to breathe very icy air?

Phrase Match

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. in the middle of a deadly | a. snow outside |
| 2. colder in many parts of the USA | b. of air and wind |
| 3. a swirling mass | c. over |
| 4. businesses have been closed due | d. falling from the roof |
| 5. breathe in the icy | e. cold snap |
| 6. dropped to a real-feel minus | f. air was dangerous |
| 7. parts of Lake Michigan froze | g. to the extreme cold |
| 8. exposing the skin to the freezing | h. than it is in Antarctica |
| 9. be careful when shoveling | i. sixty degrees Celsius |
| 10. blocks of snow and ice | j. air |

Discussion – Student B

- What do you think about what you read?
- Do you prefer the heat or the cold?
- What would you do if temperatures dropped to minus 60°C?
- What do you know about frostbite?
- What do you know about Niagara Falls?
- What do you think of shoveling snow?
- What is the best thing to do in the snow?
- What questions would you like to ask a weather forecaster?

Spelling

- in the middle of a dedyla cold snap
- It is tucenrlry colder
- a srlgwini mass of air
- declared states of ecnrqemey
- closed due to the teeexmr cold
- bhtaree in the icy air
- minus sixty edgrees Celsius
- snbelopeirs for the deaths
- Health closfifai
- girnug people to go outside
- It could lead to btroeftsi
- be careful when nhivogels snow

Answers – Synonym Match

1. g	2. e	3. i	4. b	5. c
6. a	7. j	8. f	9. h	10. d

Role Play

Role A – Heavy Snow

You think heavy snow is the worst kind of weather. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their weather. Also, tell the others which is the best of these (and why): boiling heat, freezing cold or torrential rain.

Role B – Boiling Heat

You think boiling heat is the worst kind of weather. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their weather. Also, tell the others which is the best of these (and why): heavy snow, freezing cold or torrential rain.

Role C – Freezing Cold

You think freezing cold is the worst kind of weather. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their weather. Also, tell the others which is the best of these (and why): boiling heat, heavy snow or torrential rain.

Role D – Torrential Rain

You think torrential rain is the worst kind of weather. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their weather. Also, tell the others which is the best of these (and why): boiling heat, freezing cold or heavy snow.

Speaking – Weather

Rank these with your partner. Put the worst kinds of weather at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- | | |
|----------------|-------------------------|
| • snow | • thunderstorms |
| • fog | • freezing cold |
| • hail | • gale force winds |
| • boiling heat | • raining cats and dogs |

Answers – True False

a	F	b	F	c	T	d	F	e	T	f	T	g	F	h	T
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.