

New York, New England brace for snow storm

By Bridget Murphy
The Associated Press

BOSTON – A storm poised to dump up to 3 feet of snow from New York City to Boston and beyond beginning today could be one for the record books, forecasters warned, as residents scurried to stock up on food and water and road crews readied salt and sand.

Before the first snowflake had fallen, Boston, Providence, R.I., Hartford, Conn., and other New England cities canceled school today, and airlines scratched more than 2,600 flights through Saturday,

with the disruptions from the blizzard certain to ripple across the U.S.

"This one doesn't come along every day. This is going to be a dangerous winter storm," said Alan Dunham, meteorologist for the National Weather Service in Taunton, Mass. "Wherever you need to get to, get there by this afternoon and don't plan on leaving."

The snow is expected to start today morning, with the heaviest amounts falling at night and into Saturday. Wind gusts could reach 75 mph. Widespread power failures were feared, along with flooding in coastal areas still recovering from Superstorm Sandy in October.

Boston could get up to 3 feet of snow, while New York City was expecting 10 to 12 inches. Mayor Michael Bloomberg said plows and 250,000 tons of salt were being put on standby. To the south, Philadelphia was looking at a possible 2 to 5 inches.

"We hope forecasts are exaggerating the amount of snow, but you never can tell," Bloomberg said, adding that at least the bad weather is arriving on a weekend, when the traffic is lighter and snowplows can clean up the streets more easily.

Amtrak said its Northeast trains will

stop running Friday afternoon. The organizers of New York's Fashion Week – a closely watched series of fashion shows held under a big tent – said they will have extra crews to help with snow removal and will turn up the heat and add an extra layer to the venue.

Blizzard warnings were posted for parts of New Jersey and New York's Long Island, as well as portions of Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Connecticut, including Hartford, New Haven, Conn., and Providence. The warnings extended into New Hampshire and Maine.

In New England, it could prove to be

among the top 10 snowstorms in history, and perhaps even break Boston's record of 27.6 inches, set in 2003, forecasters said. The last major snowfall in southern New England was well over a year ago – the Halloween storm of 2011.

Dunham said southern New England has seen less than half its normal snowfall this season, but "we're going to catch up in a heck of a hurry." He added: "Everybody's going to get plastered with snow." Massachusetts Gov. Deval Patrick ordered non-emergency state workers to stay home today and urged private employers to do the same.

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