

Epic Gridlock: Winter storm creates 115-mile backup along snow-clogged I-5 in Oregon



EUGENE, Ore. — There is traffic gridlock...

And then there are backups that stretch for 115 miles.

Nearly a foot of heavy, wet snow fell around the Eugene and southern Willamette Valley area Monday, toppling trees and power lines across I-5 in the area. As a result, a 94-mile stretch of the freeway was closed for over 10 hours, creating a massive 115-mile backup, according to an Oregon Department of Transportation spokesperson. For comparison, 115 miles is roughly the distance from Downtown Seattle to the Canadian border.

Drivers said road conditions were treacherous.

“It was snowing heavy. It was a mess,” said Victor Purpuree who got stuck in traffic driving up to Portland.

Purpuree said he was stuck in the closure area for 3 1/2 hours.

“It was really a flash blizzard as far as I’m concerned, but there is an awful lot of trucks off the side of the road that ran off the road, a lot of cars,” he said.

Drivers said the ice on the road was thick, causing drivers to skid off the road.

“It wasn’t just normal ice. You had a layer of it. Then you had up buildings of it. With rocks almost,” said Tim Dalessandro, a professional driver.

ODOT said it had to wait on utility crews to clear the roads of trees and downed power lines before drivers could be allowed onto the interstate. The freeway

reopened by Tuesday morning but some lane closures remain.

Source:

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