

Eye on World & Local

Snowmageddon: The Blizzard of 2010

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Photo courtesy of <http://patdollard.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/12/12-26-staten-island-blizzard.jpg>

Snowpocalypse, SMG (Snow-My-God!), or President Obama's favorite "Snowmageddon"—are all names for the record setting snowfall and blizzard conditions that struck the Northeastern United States a week before Valentine's Day 2010. The big mess started its first round on February 5th, with a weekend storm that kept most of Delaware County cozy in their homes on Saturday night. The snow accumulations from that storm were approximately 28.5 inches recorded at Philadelphia International Airport.

While Pennsylvanians incurred 160,000 power outages because of the storm, a disaster emergency was declared by Governor Ed Rendell. In comparison to the Jersey shore and Delaware, Pennsylvania really dodged an icy blast. Frozen, snow caked power lines failed, leaving Cape May and Atlantic County residents in the dark until Monday. NBC Philadelphia reports that 90,000 power outages were reported in South Jersey alone, with 61,000 in just Cape May County.

Scenes played out on local news stations of mass snowball fights in places like Rittenhouse Square in Philadelphia and even in our nation's capital Washington, D.C. There, the snowstorm didn't stop the Democratic Party's Winter Meeting on Saturday, February 6th. It was during the Winter Meeting that the President commented on supporters from California who weren't used to the conditions and coined the phrase "Snowmageddon" in reference to the storm that seemingly shut down Washington, D.C. Over 300,000 homes electricity was lost in the D.C., Maryland, and Virginia area due to fallen trees and power lines, the BBC reports.

Just when we thought the biggest snow storm since the blizzard of 1996 was over and power restored, another began on the evening of Tuesday, February 9th. This time, while all of the same Northeastern states were affected, mother nature included the North-Western parts of Pennsylvania and New York. This storm, an additional 2 feet of the fluffy stuff in some areas, wasn't so fluffy. Meteorologists confirmed that this snow was denser and wetter—prime snowball making material but also extremely dangerous. NBC Philadelphia meteorologist Glenn "Hurricane" Schwartz issued a warning in a video, Wednesday, on their website that roof collapses would happen because of the snows weight and because of the layer of sleet that fell in between snowfalls. Nearly an additional 20 inches of snow fell on Philadelphia and surrounding areas, something unheard of, and also something that was deemed unlikely to happen in the same century.

Washington, D.C., the United States government, and many major roadways closed down because of treacherous conditions. SEPTA, BART, and NJ Transit cancelled bus service and the Philadelphia International Airport cancelled flights. The city of Philadelphia was declared closed Thursday after the storm for snow removal. PECO Energy reported 120,000 outages in its service area as a result of the storm. The National Weather Service said record snow totals of 71.6 inches were reached for our entire winter season so far, thus beating the Blizzard of 1996 which totaled 65.5 inches.

Not heeding the warning from "Hurricane", the Smithsonian Institute National Air and Space Museum was even affected by the second Nor'Easter. Part of the Air and Space Museum's storage building in Maryland collapsed but with no reported damages or injuries. Perhaps the real victory of the 2010 storm was not for the pre-blizzard ambushed grocery stores or for the folks in the snow removal business, but for area children as most public and parochial schools closed.

More Kaizen Needed with Toyota

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Kaizen is a Japanese word, and when translated it means "continuous improvement". This is a philosophy that Toyota adopted long before all of its recalls began, but they'll be making use of it now more than ever. Toyota voluntarily recalled its 2010 Prius on February 8th of this year, stating an "update was needed to the anti-lock brake system."

This hasn't been the first that we've heard of Toyota recalling its cars in the past 5 months. In October of 2009, Toyota issued a recall of over 4.2 million cars because of pedals getting stuck under floor mats in certain cars. Whether or not this truly was the problem, we'll never know because nearly four months later another recall was announced.

This time, eight of its popular car models were included in the recall, adding to the car industry's already bleak year of sales in 2009. Late in January, Toyota suspended sales on its 2009-2010 RAV4, Corolla, and Matrix; its 2010 Highlander; 2005-2010 Avalon; 2007-2010 Camry; 2008-2010 Sequoia; and its 2007-2010 Tundra. The issue this time, accelerator pedals that stick making the driver unable to stop, an obvious hazard while driving. Safety Research & Strategies, a consumer-advocacy group that specializes in motor vehicle issues, records that since 1999 approximately 26 deaths, 819 crashes, and 2,262 cases of unintended acceleration have occurred in these Toyota models.

It is very important that Toyota owners don't panic and press hard on their brake pedals if they find themselves accelerating without warning. Step by step instructions are posted on Toyota's recall website, www.toyota.com/recall/pedal.html. Drivers should:

- Brake, but don't pump brakes
- Shift the transmission gear into neutral
- Slowly, make your way to the side of the road
- Turn your engine off

Reuters reports that the founder's grandson and president of Toyota, Akio Toyoda, wants to use another philosophy—one of its five—as a means to regain loyal Toyota customers back. "With myself taking the lead, and by keeping to the 'genchi genbutsu' principle, all of us at Toyota will tackle the issue in close cooperation with dealers and suppliers together, we will do everything in our power to regain the confidence of our customers," said Toyoda at a press conference. "Genchi genbutsu" is translated as "go and see."

In an effort to improve its steadily declining PR image, Toyoda also wrote an op/ed in the Washington Post stating how Toyota was dealing with all of its issues. Japan isn't by itself in trying to clean up the company's image. Jim Lentz, President and Chief Operating Officer of Toyota Motor Sales, U.S.A., Inc. issued a statement entitled "Toyota's Pledge To You" telling customers that, "We know we need to do better. We are committed to doing just that." Needless to say plenty of continuous improvement will be needed to dig Toyota out of the recall grave it dug itself into. To see if your vehicle has been affected, please visit www.toyota.com/recall.

Haiti's Orphans Still Survive

By Tiffany R-Morris - Lion's Eye Staff Writer - tjr5073@psu.edu

As the Haiti relief effort continues, humanitarians give pause to the growing concern for the islands Orphans. According to United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF) more than 300,000 children were affected by the earthquake. Currently, adoptive agencies around the world are flying out as many Haitian children as they can. The Associated Press reports that countries accepting orphans are among Europe, Canada, and the US.

Before the earthquake, many families filed for adoption with several Haiti orphanages. Therefore, families have turned to their governments and humanitarian organizations for help getting out to the children. Los Angeles native and adoptive mother, Allison Garwood, spoke out in a CNN article, stating "The U.S. needs to not only allow but demand that children be sent to their adoptive families right away."

The call was heard and Haitian children have been arriving in the US for the past month. According to the Associated Press, "more than 50 children, most of whom already have adoptive families waiting for them, arrived in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania." The article continues to report that children, with relatives living in the US, were next to arrive.

The effort still continues, but with buildings reduced to rubble and Haiti's adoption officials missing, the battle to rescue all of Haiti's children wanes. In CNN's interview with Dixie Bickel, director of God's Littlest Angels orphanage just outside Port-au-Prince, he states "I would like to see the international community come up with a plan for the children that have been adopted." With that said, God's Little Angels' website has posted that the government has closed all adoptions until further notice.

To donate to the Haiti relief effort: Please visit Student Affairs, Second Floor Commons Building -- All Donations Help!