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Heavy Snow Strands Drivers in New South Wales Storm

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A rare and intense winter storm swept across the Northern Tablelands of New South Wales on Saturday, dumping heavy snow, triggering widespread road closures, and prompting a significant emergency response throughout the region.

According to the New South Wales State Emergency Service (SES), snow depths reached up to 50 centimeters (20 inches) in high-altitude areas such as Guyra and Armidale. The snowfall is among the heaviest recorded in more than a decade and brought major

disruptions to key transport routes. The New England Highway, Waterfall Way, and Oxley Highway were particularly affected by black ice, downed trees, and localized flooding.

More than 200 vehicles became stranded in hazardous conditions, with some motorists forced to remain in their cars overnight. Emergency crews worked throughout the day to assist trapped drivers and restore access to key routes, although worsening weather slowed their progress.

In addition to heavy snowfall, the storm system delivered significant rainfall across parts of the Northern Tablelands. Rainfall totals ranged from 65 millimeters to as much as 130 millimeters (2.5 to 5 inches), raising concerns about potential flooding along the Peel and Namoi Rivers. Gusts of wind reaching up to 100 kilometers per hour (62 miles per hour) also caused damage to infrastructure, power lines, and trees, further complicating recovery efforts.

The SES reported that 745 storm-related incidents were logged in the 24-hour period leading up to 4:30 p.m. on Saturday. Over 1,000 SES volunteers were deployed across the state to support rescue and relief operations. At the height of the event, up to 34 severe weather alerts were in effect.

Guyra, located at an elevation of approximately 1,330 meters, saw snow depths of over 15 centimeters (6 inches) by midday. Some unofficial local reports estimated accumulations of up to 40 centimeters (16 inches). Armidale, situated at a slightly lower altitude, recorded between 10 and 14 centimeters (4 to 5.5 inches) of snow. These totals represent the most significant snowfall in the area in more than ten years.

Snowfall of this magnitude is highly unusual for this region of Australia. While the Northern Tablelands occasionally experiences snow during winter, accumulations above 15 centimeters are rare and typically occur only once every few years.

Authorities are urging residents to stay indoors, avoid unnecessary travel, and monitor updates from emergency services. Road crews and weather agencies continue to assess conditions as the region recovers from the unexpected storm.