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Snow Storm Paralyzes Kamchatka

January 13, 2026



Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky. **kamtoday.ru**

A major winter storm hit Far East Russia's Kamchatka peninsula overnight on Tuesday, burying entire neighborhoods, triggering urban avalanches and forcing officials to deploy their vehicle fleet as a makeshift taxi service in the regional capital.

The city of Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky and the town of Vilyuchinsk on the southeastern tip of the peninsula were hit hardest, with 39 millimeters (1.5 inches) of precipitation recorded in less than 24 hours, according to the Emergency Situations Ministry.

The major Pacific cyclone brought life to a standstill in Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky, with public transit suspended and residents reporting being "completely buried" by snow drifts up to the second floor.

The mayor's office announced school closures through the end of the week, effectively extending children's New Year holidays.

With standard buses unable to navigate the drifts, the administration deployed several high-clearance off-road trucks to ferry residents along main city arteries.

Governor Vladimir Solodov said authorities had managed to maintain heating and electricity in most areas despite pressure on the grid.

State-run news agencies reported that hurricane-force winds knocked out several apartment building windows, damaged parked vehicles and blew the entire roof off of a private home.

There were no reports of injuries or deaths.

In one case, the extreme snow depth forced paramedics to carry a patient for nearly 1,000 yards to reach a waiting ambulance, according to the news outlet Govorit Nemoskva.

Forecasters expect a second cyclone to hit the shores of Kacmhatka as soon as Wednesday evening.

Original url: https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2026/01/13/snow-storm-paralyzes-kamchatka-a91665