Missouri universities begin calling off classes

COLUMBIA, Mo. (AP) - Missouri universities are beginning to call off classes as a fresh round of snow begins to fall.

The University of Missouri-Columbia is canceling all classes, exams and events planned for Tuesday. Only employees who are deemed "situationally critical" are required to be on campus.

MU Health Care's hospitals and emergency rooms will remain open, as will the MU Veterinary Medical Teaching Hospital emergency service.

The University of Missouri-Kansas City canceled evening classes Monday but hadn't yet announced whether Tuesday's classes would be canceled.
KANSAS CITY, Mo. — The second major snowstorm in a week battered the nation's midsection Tuesday, dropping a half-foot or more of snow across Missouri and Kansas and cutting power to thousands. Gusting winds blew drifts more than 2 feet high and created treacherous driving conditions for those who dared the morning commute.

About 40,000 people in northwest Missouri and northeast Kansas awoke to no power as heavy, wet snow weighed on power lines. Kansas City, Mo., was in a state of emergency as blinding snowfall - made worst by sustained gusts estimated at 30 mph or higher - made car and truck traffic too dangerous. About 8 inches of new snow had fallen on parts of the Kansas City metro area as the sun rose Tuesday.

Flights in and out of Kansas City International Airport were canceled, schools, government offices and businesses across the region were closed. City buses were getting stuck.

Numerous accidents were reported in the area, and Mayor Sly James declared the emergency in an unwanted encore to a major snowstorm that dumped nearly a foot of snow on his city just five days earlier. He urged residents to stay home, given that the new storm was expected to dump nearly a foot of new snow on the city.

"This one has the potential to be quite serious," James said.

A strong low pressure system fueled the storm, which also included heavy rain and thunderstorms in eastern Oklahoma and Texas.
The storm knocked power out to thousands of homes in Texas and Oklahoma and was blamed for the death of a 21-year-old man whose SUV hit an icy patch on Interstate 70 in northwestern Kansas and overturned Monday. In Oklahoma, a person was killed after 15 inches of snow brought down part of a roof in the northwest town of Woodward.

In the Texas Panhandle, wind gusts up to 75 mph and heavy snow had made all roads impassable and created whiteout conditions, said Paul Braun, a spokesman for the Texas Department of Transportation. A hurricane-force gust of 75 mph was recorded at the Amarillo, Texas, airport. The city saw the biggest snowfall total in Texas with 17 inches.

Motorists were stranded throughout the Texas Panhandle, with the NWS in Lubbock reporting as many as 100 vehicles at a standstill on Interstate 27.

Schools and major highways in the Texas Panhandle remained closed for a second day Tuesday. State officials said they hoped that stretches of Interstate 40 near the Oklahoma border, which have been closed since Monday morning, would reopen by Tuesday afternoon. Whiteout conditions further impeded efforts to clear roads of more than a foot of snow in western Oklahoma early Tuesday.

Texas Tech's men's basketball team stayed overnight at a hotel in Manhattan, Kan., after playing Kansas State on Monday night, rather try to drive back to Lubbock. Also late Monday, officials with Oklahoma State University announced it would be closed Tuesday due to the weather.

The American Red Cross opened a shelter Monday night in Woodward, Okla., for stranded travelers. It also told its volunteers and workers in Kansas City to be prepared to help in the case of power outages or large numbers of stranded travelers.

**Area hospitals closed outpatient and urgent care centers, and the University of Missouri canceled classes for Tuesday.** The Missouri Department of Transportation issued a "no travel" advisory asking people to stay off affected highways except in case of a dire emergency.

Meteorologist Mike Umscheid of the National Weather Service office in Dodge City, Kan., said this latest storm combined with the storm last week will help alleviate the drought conditions that have plagued farmers and ranchers across the Midwest, and could be especially helpful to the winter wheat crop planted last fall.

But getting two back-to-back storms of this magnitude doesn't mean the drought is finished.

"If we get one more storm like this with widespread 2 inches of moisture, we will continue to chip away at the drought, but to claim the drought is over or ending is way too premature," Umscheid said.
City braces for another winter storm

MU MENTION PAGE 2

Columbia and other parts of Missouri that received a lot of snow last week are expected to get hit hard again Monday night and Tuesday.

The National Weather Service has issued a winter storm warning for tonight into tomorrow, and Columbia could get up to 7 inches of snow, said Jim Kramper, warning coordination meteorologist for the National Weather Service.

"Unfortunately, the same people that got it last time could potentially get it again," Kramper said.

The storm will start tonight as rain that could mix with sleet, Kramper said. After midnight, it is expected to turn to mostly snow that will continue into tomorrow morning. Columbia is looking at 3 to 5 inches of snow overnight, he said, and possibly another 2 inches in the morning.

"We're potentially looking at totals of 4 to 7 inches," he said.

The eastern portion of the state, including the St. Louis area, likely will have little to no snow, Kramper said.

"We're mainly expecting rain," said Kramper, who is in St. Louis.

City offices will be closed tomorrow because of the forecast, and there will be no trash pickup or transit service. All city meetings scheduled for tomorrow are canceled. The Activity & Recreation Center will be closed.

A full crew is set to come in later tonight to plow streets, Public Works spokesman Steve Sapp said, but a definite time hadn't been set as of this morning. The department planned to get a more formal plan in place this afternoon after receiving an update from its private weather forecaster. Today also was spent doing maintenance on seven vehicles.

Columbia Public Schools hadn't talked about a snow day plan as of early this morning, but spokeswoman Michelle Baumstark said the typical rule of thumb is to call off school before 6 a.m. when snow hits.
"We really have to have conversations about what's happening with the weather and the timing of when it's going to hit," Baumstark said. "One of the reasons we were able to calls so early" Thursday "was because the timing of the last storm really was problematic. We didn't want to get into a situation of going to do early dismissals. That creates a lot of complications and safety concerns."

District staff will start driving roads around 3 or 4 a.m. tomorrow to make a decision, she said.

Schools had two snow days last week. Columbia schools have six snow days built into the calendar, Baumstark said, and that likely means staff and students won't have to make up any days this year. "We're in pretty good shape," she said.

The University of Missouri has two "days of grace" built into its calendar, said Harry Tyrer, chairman of the Faculty Council, and won't have to make up the days missed last week. A snow day tomorrow, however, would have to be made up.

Administrators planned to meet this afternoon to discuss a plan for tomorrow, spokesman Christian Basi said.

When the university shut down for four days in 2011, it shortened finals to make up for missed days.

This article was published in the Monday, February 25, 2013 edition of the Columbia Daily Tribune with the headline "City braces for another blast: Closings begin as storm nears."
MU to close campus on Tuesday

By GH Lindsey
February 25, 2013 | 4:34 p.m. CST

COLUMBIA — **MU will be closed Tuesday because of a large snowstorm forecast to enter the area Monday evening, according to the MU News Bureau.**

No in-person classes, exams or events will be held, but online classes and hybrid classes

The storm is expected to dump 6 to 8 inches of snow on Columbia overnight.

Such a storm would be the second major snowfall in less than a week. Another winter storm dropped 10.2 inches on the area Thursday, according to a measurement taken at Columbia Regional Airport. This prompted MU to cancel classes Thursday afternoon and Friday.

MU officials will assess conditions Tuesday and determine whether to cancel classes Wednesday, spokesman Christian Basi said.

University officials also cited concerns from local and state authorities. The Missouri Department of Transportation has issued a "**no travel**" advisory for the state.

"The faculty and registrar will be discussing how to make up classes when they resume," Basi said.

MU Health Care and its hospitals will remain open, as will the MU Veterinary Medical Teaching Hospital, according to the News Bureau release. Here is a [list of MU Health Care facilities that will not be open Tuesday](#).

*Supervising editor is Elizabeth Brixey.*
MU prepares for Tuesday snowstorm

MU Campus Facilities staff prepared for a long night as a winter storm warning went into effect Monday night.

“We will have folks stay overnight tonight and be ready to deal with snow issues,” said Pete Millier, director of landscape services at MU Campus Facilities. “The snow will probably start around 1 to 3 (a.m.) tomorrow and will be fast and furious for the first few hours. We’re actually getting everybody lined up now. It does no good for anybody to wait until the snow is on the ground. We try to have our staff here so it is safe for them to get to campus and be able to start on snow removal when they need to.”

Millier and his team were given increased funding to respond to snowstorms after 2011’s “Snowpocalypse.”

“For a typical Missouri winter, we had an adequate budget prior to (the 2011 storm), but when you get 18 inches it wipes out the budget and then some,” Millier said.

The snow removal does not always have to come entirely out of MU’s pocket.

“You spend all this money and then if it is declared a disaster by the governor then FEMA can step in and reimburse you,” said Millier, “But it takes the federal government a year or two to process your claim, so you have a deficit for awhile.”

Tuesday’s storm prompted MU administrative officials to cancel school, citing “the potential for hazardous weather conditions and the advisories from city and state officials as considerations for the closure” in a news release. Monday projections for Columbia predicted 6 inches to 11 inches of snow.

“While the forecast may say you are going to get six inches you may get 8, 9 or 10. Forecasting is not an exact science,” said Millier. “We gear up before the snow starts falling, we have a management plan that we put into effect and we start dealing with it before the first flake hits.”

Although it seems as though funding would keep increasing after two heavy snowfalls within the same number of years, there will most likely not be an additional increase in funding, Millier said.

“I mean it would be great if we had more money allocated for snow removal, but you have to fund based on an average and you try to do a 10-year average,” he said. “While it may appear in recent memory that we’ve had these big snows, when you average them out its pretty normal. I’ve been here eight years and we’ve only had three major events so I’d say that’s pretty good.”
Fox Apologizes For Comments On Wiccans At University Of Missouri

COLUMBIA, Mo. (RNS) Fox News contributor Tucker Carlson has apologized for comments he made about Wiccans, saying he "should have left them alone."

"Comments in the story offended a number of people -- that was never my intention," Carlson said on the show Saturday (Feb 23). "I also violated one of my basic life rules, which is live and let live. The Wiccans have never bothered me or tried to control my life. I should have left them alone. Sorry about that."

More than 40,000 people had asked for Carlson to apologize through two online petitions after Carlson, the editor in chief of The Daily Caller, spoke against the University of Missouri's guidelines for religious holidays.

"Any religion whose most sacred day is Halloween, I just can't take seriously," Carlson said on the Feb. 17 broadcast of "Fox and Friends" weekend show that touched off the controversy. "I mean, call me a bigot."

"Every Wiccan I've ever known is either a compulsive deep Dungeons and Dragons player or is a middle-aged, twice-divorced older woman living in a rural area who works as a midwife," he said.

The university's guide to religions, an educational and planning resource for faculty, staff and students, lists practices and observations for religious holidays from many faiths. It also recommends accommodations for students, such as avoiding major deadlines during holidays that involve fasting.

Eight pagan holidays were added to the guide last fall.

The buzz began on Feb. 12 with a post by University of Missouri graduate student Christopher White on The College Fix. White criticized the university's guide to religions for listing Wiccan and other pagan festivals "right alongside major religious holidays."

Soon after, Fox News.com reported that "Students at the University of Missouri don't need to cram for exams that fall on Wiccan and Pagan holidays, now that the school has
put them on par with Christmas, Thanksgiving and Hanukah." The article called it "all part of the school's effort to include everyone's beliefs, although some critics say listing every holiday associated with fringe belief systems is a bit much."

Fox contributor and radio host Tammy Bruce criticized the religious list in the article, saying "It almost seems as though we're looking for excuses for people to not have to take their commitments seriously. It's beyond political correctness; it's almost like an excuse to do nothing. It's like social nihilism, where nothing matters."

Bruce said the university's decision to include the pagan holidays is "less about elevating other religions and other individuals and more about diluting the dynamic about what's important in people's lives."

Members of Hearthfires, a group of mid-Missouri pagans from different spiritual paths, watched some of Fox's coverage during one of their regular meetings. The group's response was mixed -- half-smiles and raised eyebrows, half disappointment and hurt.

When Carlson said "Call me a bigot," one Hearthfires member responded: "You are."

"How many Wiccans can name every Wiccan holiday?" Carlson said a few moments later. "I can -- and I'm not even Wiccan," another Hearthfires member said.

The Fox stories prompted a flurry of online responses in the Pagan blogosphere, with one Facebook page demanding a Fox apology generating close to 3,000 likes. The comments prompted articles and editorials in the University of Missouri's student newspaper, The Maneater, as well as local newspapers the Columbia Missourian and the Columbia Daily Tribune.

"What we're doing is making sure people understand the Fox News article is wrong," said university spokesman Christian Basi.

Contrary to the Fox News article, "the University of Missouri is not recommending any accommodations for students observing Wiccan or pagan holidays," the university said in a statement.

The Fox News story "made assumptions about our religious guide and the reporter did not read through the guide carefully," the university said.

Two days after the Feb. 17 show, Carlson apologized on Twitter: "To Wiccans and pagans: Sorry for my pointlessly nasty remarks. Your holidays still confuse me, but you seem like nice people."
MU student accused of robbing Quinton's

Monday, February 25, 2013 at 2:00 pm

A University of Missouri student has been arrested after police say he stole alcohol and jumped off the roof off a downtown bar early Sunday in an attempt to evade police.

Columbia police arrested Libertyville, Ill., resident Evan J. Policht, 19, in an alleyway near Quinton's Bar, 124 Ninth St., said Officer Latisha Stroer.

Moments earlier, the freshman was seen by Quinton's management on the upper patio that was closed to patrons. When management approached Policht, he fled outside onto a higher patio and then jumped off the rooftop into the alleyway, Stroer said.

Management told police they saw Policht and another man with crates of liquor in their hands, Stroer said. They also found a back door to the business had been pried open and broken.

Policht was arrested on suspicion of first-degree burglary, minor in possession of intoxicating liquor, first-degree property damage and felony stealing. He was released from the Boone County Jail after posting $19,300 bond.

Police reports this morning noted only one arrest in the incident.
USA TODAY investigative series, Money section honored

USA TODAY's "Ghost Factories" series on the lead-poisoning dangers posed by hundreds of forgotten factory sites has won the top prize for investigative reporting for large news organizations from the Association of Health Care Journalists.

Another USA TODAY series, "When Health Care Makes you Sick," by Peter Eisler, won second place in the contest's public health category. The ongoing series examines the scope and impact of health care-associated infections in medical facilities nationwide.

Also, the newspaper had three winners in the Society of American Business Editors and Writers "Best in Business" competition: "Ghost Factories" in the Innovation category and Thomas Frank in the Explanatory category for his series entitled: "Green Inc.: Environmentalism for Profit." USA TODAY's Money section won an award for "General Excellence" in the large newspaper category.

The AHCJ awards from the University of Missouri-based journalism organization recognize the best health reporting of 2012 in 12 categories from among more than 400 entries. Other first-place winners include reports on the enormous financial costs of medical care from The Wall Street Journal and a probe of unnecessary dental treatments by The Center for Public Integrity and PBS' Frontline. The full list of winners can be found at the AHCJ web site.

SABEW selected 134 winners from 1,120 entries, its most ever. Bloomberg News and its related magazines, Bloomberg Markets and Bloomberg Businessweek, led with 14 wins. The full list of winners is on SABEW's web site.

In "Ghost Factories," USA TODAY revealed that federal and state environmental agencies were warned more than a decade ago that soil in hundreds of neighborhoods might be contaminated with dangerous levels of lead from closed factories that operated in the 1930s to 1960s. Yet, USA TODAY found officials did little to investigate many of the sites or warn people living nearby of the dangers to their children from playing in the dirt and putting dusty hands or toys in their mouths. USA TODAY's investigation, led by reporter Alison Young, with additional reporting by Eisler, included documenting dangers at more than 230 sites and testing soil in 21 neighborhoods.
It has resulted in federal and state officials reopening investigations and beginning cleanups. The full series is at ghostfactories.usatoday.com.

Eisler's stories have revealed that health care-related infections are far more common and deadly than government statistics suggest, and they have explained how medical institutions have ignored guidance on how to curb the problem. The stories include:

Frank's series examined the way "green" buildings are designed and operate, and how they qualify as "green" under the U.S. Green Building Council's LEED program (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design), which often rewards minor, low-cost steps that have little or no proven environmental benefit. The stories and related video can be viewed here.