

Hundreds of trains cancelled after snow sweeps across the south east

- South of London operators worst hit, but increasing disruption reported elsewhere
- Many surface sections of London Underground closed: no trams and very few buses

The wintry weather which swept in from the continent overnight paralysed many rail routes in the south east of England, and the forecasters are predicting worse to come.

The snow began falling last night in much of the south east, and operators spent the night drawing up emergency timetables.

Even so many trains have been cancelled today, and would-be passengers were being urged not to travel unless they must.

In London most Underground lines were being disrupted to some extent, with no service on western sections of the District, in much of outer north west London or between North Greenwich and Stratford.

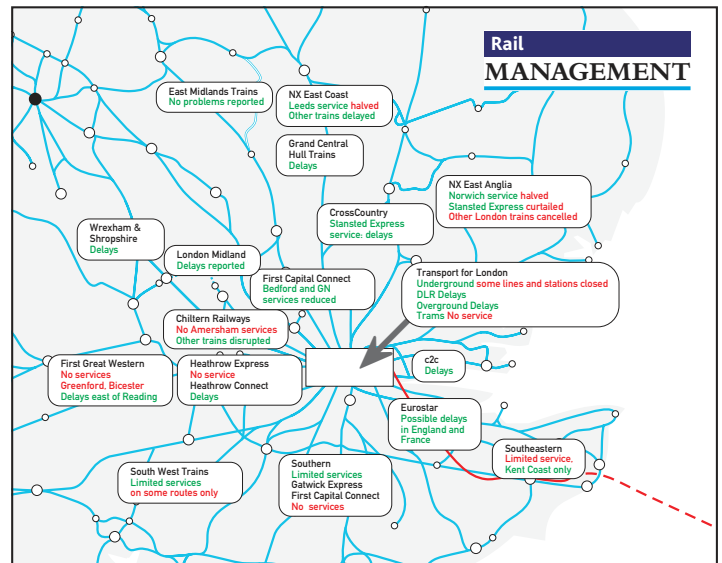
Even central London has not been immune: there was no Circle line service, no District service on the Edgware Road branch and nothing running on the Hammersmith & City line. A number of central London stations have also been partially closed, mainly to sub-surface services, but Victoria line trains were not stopping at Oxford Circus because of overcrowding.

TfL said Overground and DLR services were continuing, but warned of 'severe delays'. Nine DLR stations remained closed today.

No trams were running in Croydon, and all TfL bus services were suspended overnight. A limited service was restored during the day.

National Rail operators south of the Thames have been worst hit so far, with no services to London on the Brighton line and only limited services running on other Southern routes.

All Southeastern trains to London were cancelled, with only a few services still running in the Kent coast area.



South West Trains introduced an emergency timetable affecting almost all its routes. The problems became even worse after dawn: early reports that services to Epsom were being disrupted were followed by the news that the line had been closed.

Other SWT services withdrawn included London to Guildford via Cobham, London to Haslemere, Guildford to Ascot and Woking to Alton.

National Express East Coast reduced its service between London and Leeds, and First Capital Connect said only a restricted service was possible on the Bedford and Great Northern routes.

National Express East Anglia warned of widespread disruption: Stansted Express trains were running between London and Bishops Stortford only, the Norwich intercity service was halved to hourly, and other trains from East Anglia were being terminated at Ipswich.

First Great Western reported disruption between Reading and London, and no trains to Greenford or Bicester Town. Snow is not a problem in the south west, but trains between Par and Newquay have been replaced by buses after a landslide.

Eurostar was running, but warned of possible delays on either side of the Channel: there has also been heavy snow in northern France.

A number of websites crashed under the weight of traffic, as commuters tried to find out if they could get to work. These included ATOC's core National Rail Enquiries Service.

Online access to Chiltern, Southern, Southeastern and c2c also failed, while SWT and National Express East Anglia stripped down their websites to show emergency information only.

Forecasters were warning of more problems, as further bands of snow arrive during today and tonight. The Midlands and North will increasingly be affected as well. ●