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Valdez socked in

Dispatch Staff

Dec 17, 2009

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All the experts say the effects of climate change will be felt most in Alaska, home of the ex-governor who contends climate change is no big deal.

Good thing she wasn't in Valdez this week when the citizenry got buried under a record snowfall. We're not talking about your ordinary little dump here. That was in Copenhagen, where world leaders were meeting to discuss what to do about global warming and the [Bloomberg news service was warning](#) that Barack Obama and the rest would "face freezing weather as a blizzard dumped 10 centimeters (4 inches) of snow on the Danish capital overnight."

Four inches *overnight*? Valdez got more than four inches *per hour* at the height of the snowstorm that began there Monday and ran through the week. By the time the citizens of Alaska's only oil port finally caught a break, the snow was piled 5 feet, 8 inches deep.

Yes, you read right.

Five feet, 8 inches; over the head of your average American woman, up the nose of your average American man. The National Weather Service called it record. Fire hydrants were buried so deep under snow not even Tiger Woods could have hit them.

Not that residents are letting it bother them too much. At Valdez City Hall Thursday afternoon, accounting clerk Chris Moulton looked out the window and didn't see any lights on in other buildings - City Hall has a generator, he said, but it looked like everyone else was in the dark.

Valdez public library

Chris Moulton photo

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Moulton said the National Weather Service estimate was probably already a little low; on Wednesday evening they'd reported 63.5 inches, but, he said, "we easily got (another) foot last night."

The biggest problem? Snow removal from the streets, where berms are piled something like three or four feet deep.

Oh, and the harbor.

Moulton has a 25-foot aluminum cabin cruiser moored in the small boat harbor. For the past few days he's been leaving work at lunchtime to shovel the deck. Boat owners who haven't made it down -- well, Moulton said, there've been "a lot of near misses."

And then there was the one that didn't make it. The fishing vessel sank in "under an hour," Moulton said, probably because of the heavy snow load coupled with a failed pump or through fitting. Photographs show a frosty mast protruding from ice- and snow-cobbled water, punching the air like a metallic Michael Phelps.

And yet life goes on in Valdez, where the schools are still open despite the fact that a few buses got stuck in the ever-deeper drifts.

Moulton, still basking in the glow of generator-powered lights, shrugged it off. It's Valdez, he said. People who grew up there don't really take big snowfall seriously.

"No one really freaks out over here."

Wonder what Bloomberg would make of that?

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Posted By: [AlaskaPaul](#) @ 12.18.2009 2:10 PM

"home of the ex-governor who contends climate change is no big deal."

Can you cite a source for that? Seriously, you guys need to stop sowing the seeds of hate and discontent with these erroneous quotes and remarks. Palin says she's not sure that it's caused by man. She did acknowledge it and created a committee to study and make recommendations on it.

Please, stop.

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