A powerful storm of ice and rain is sweeping across the United States, knocking out power grids and causing havoc for those travelling by road, train or air. At least seven people have died due to the extreme weather, which is expected to continue into next week.

**Quote:** *"Ice and rain pelting the central United States have killed at least six people, forced the cancellation of hundreds of flights in Texas and knocked out power to more than 100,000 customers in Missouri and Oklahoma, officials and media reports said on Saturday. "The Plains are just getting hammered," said Michael Eckert, a National Weather Service forecaster. "Areas from Oklahoma, northern Texas, across Missouri, northwest Arkansas into central Illinois, those are getting hit by a lot of freezing rain and sleet." Travel warnings have been issued along the storm's path, and six storm-related deaths have been reported in Oklahoma and Kansas City, Missouri, since Friday, local media reports said.*

Where I live we had some terrible storms within the last week, with torrential rain and gale force winds. A weatherman on UK television predicted that December and January would be particularly bad because of heightened activity in the sun. Experts say the amount of solar activity we are seeing is unusual, as we are supposed to be at the low point of the sun cycle. The sun is expected to enter a period of high activity around 2010, and the next cycle is predicted to be around 30-50% stronger than the last one.

Source Reuters , SF Gate