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# Tumbleweeds blocked a Washington state highway, trapping people in their cars

by Marie DeFreitas



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Contributing Writer Telegraph Local | [See My Website](#)

Motorists in Washington state experienced an oddly scary road blockage on New Year's Eve. Tumbleweeds blocked a Washington state highway, trapping people in their cars. Strong winds blew in a thicket of tumbleweeds onto a portion of the highway.

According to Washington State Patrol Trooper Chris Thorson, who spoke to [CNN](#), the tumbleweeds slowed down several vehicles. Several cars and one semi truck slowed down because of low visibility and eventually came to a stop.

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Many people associate Washington State with rain, Thorson explained. However, the southwest region has a high desert climate.

Around 6:30 pm on New Year's Eve, 911 calls began coming in, according to [NPR](#). When state troopers and transportation workers responded, they found vehicles completely engulfed, with people stuck inside.

Thorson wrote on his Twitter that the piles of tumbleweeds were as high as 20 to 30 feet in some places. He said they blocked SR 240 around mile post 10, about 20 miles west of Richland in the south-central part of the state.

Crews from the Washington state Department of Transportation **worked through the night** to help clear the roadway. The road closed for 10 hours and reopened at 4:30 a.m. on Wednesday, Thorson said, according to [CNN](#).

Thorson said snowplows picked up dozens of tumbleweeds at a time, and pushed them to a clear, wide-open area so that high winds could pick them back up and whisk them away, according to [NPR](#).

One car was found trapped until after the sun rose, but it had been abandoned by its driver, Thorson said. No injuries were reported.

"In the 20 years that I have worked here, I have never seen it as bad as this," says [Thorson](#). "I've never seen six to eight cars, including a semi-truck, actually stopped and trapped on a highway because of tumbleweeds."

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the Washington State Department of Transportation East **tweeted**. "Big thanks to our crews who worked through the night to clear roadway."

"To have it happen on New Year's Eve and into the New Year," says Thorson, "I'm not exactly sure what that bodes for 2020."



**Trooper C. Thorson**  
@wspd3pio

#tumblegeddon After 10 hours of SR 240 being closed last night on New Year's Eve, it was opened around 0430 thanks to @WSDOT\_East We still have one abandon car trapped in the tumbleweeds that was found at daylight, luckily no one was in it.



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