

TO: Mayor Stokes and City Councilmembers

FROM: Mark Poch, Assistant Director, 452-6137
Transportation Department

Curry Mayer, Emergency Manager, 452-2816
Fire Department

DATE: November 20, 2017

SUBJECT: Winter Weather Preparedness/Response; Office of Emergency Management



Flooding



Ice and Snow



Landslides



Wind Storms

Introduction

Bellevue experiences a wide range of weather during the winter season, including heavy rain, strong winds, and snow/ice events. Bellevue's topography has a direct influence on our preparedness and response activities, especially for snow and ice, considering Bellevue's neighborhoods range in elevation from lake level to over 1400 feet. In addition to densely populated, high-elevation terrain, we also have some of the steepest roads in the region. The Transportation Department works with staff and resources from the Utilities, Parks, and Civic Services Departments to provide a coordinated response to winter weather events. The Office of Emergency Management (OEM) facilitates interdepartmental training activities and staffs the Emergency Operations Center (EOC).

Weather Monitoring and 2017-18 Winter Weather Outlook

The National Weather Service (NWS) recently presented at the Regional Winter Weather seminar attended by members of local public works agencies including Bellevue. They see a strong indication of La Nina for this winter season, with a tendency toward cooler, wetter weather, and the possibility of stronger than normal winds. This forecast is similar to last year. Although we consider seasonal forecasts, we mostly use this information for awareness and consistently prepare to respond to all events each year regardless of seasonal forecast because it is just that – a forecast.

We greatly depend on shorter term (current to 14 day) forecasts to execute equipment, material, and staff planning for weather events. To aide in this effort, Bellevue subscribes to Northwest WeatherNet for Bellevue-specific forecasts and access to local meteorologists 24-hours per day. We also utilize local stations, National Weather Service weather forecasts, and information available from the University of Washington.

Preparedness, Response, and Recovery – One City Approach

Eligible staff from the Transportation, Utilities, Parks, and Civic Services Departments are trained in response and recovery activities prior to the winter season. This year the Ice and Snow Operator training was held on October 25th. Advance preparedness includes the annual staff training event, stocking materials, equipment maintenance and testing, weather monitoring, and event planning. Event response activities include sharing staff and equipment resources between departments, and strategically prioritizing response activities based on storm severity to the most critical needs. Once the event subsides, recovery efforts focus on restoring all City services as quickly, safely, and efficiently as possible.

Priority of Response

- Life Safety
- Property Damage
- Mobility

Key Operational Objectives

- Clear streets of snow, ice, water, and debris
- Restore mobility and assist in keeping City services operating
- Provide up-to-date information to the public and City leadership

Lead Departments

- Snow & Ice – Trans.
- Flood - Utilities
- Wind - Transportation

Snow Inventory

- 7 – 4x4 trucks – steeper terrain
- 8 – 5 yard large trucks – flats/major roads
- 2 – 4x4 De-icer trucks
- 2 – 4x4 support trucks – turn pockets/de-icer

Civic Services and Parks are critical departments in winter weather response activities. Civic Services not only addresses facility needs, they also service vehicles and equipment before, during, and after events. In addition to providing staffing, Parks leads snow removal efforts on Fire Station and Hospital properties.

Preparation efforts also include establishing which roads will receive pre-event anti-icer application to address conditions such as freezing fog, expected ice, or expected snow. Anti-icer can be applied when certain conditions are met to help reduce the formation of roadway ice and decrease the bond between the road and snow, aiding in snow removal efforts.

Ice and Snow Response Expectation Management

Bellevue's elevation ranges present a public relations/expectations challenge for ice and snow response. Since many ice and snow events occur only at higher elevations, resources are usually sufficient to service residential streets in addition to priority routes. However, if snow or ice is accumulating City-wide, only priority routes will receive continuous plowing and/or de-icing until conditions stabilize. The timing and intensity of snow or freeze also has an impact on response effectiveness; if conditions deteriorate during a commute, the response/plow vehicles cannot service the roadways as quickly or effectively due to traffic congestion. We are typically able to handle as a top priority specific requests from Fire or Police to aide their response efforts.

Office of Emergency Management (OEM)

The Fire Department's OEM conducts training and exercise activities for operational departments using winter weather scenarios. The OEM is also able to quickly staff the EOC with trained City staff for widespread, significant winter weather events to:

- Assist with the coordination of multiple department resources to most efficiently respond to a weather event
- Support and coordinate with department operational command centers
- Coordinate public safety activities such as rescue, sheltering, or evacuation
- Provide situational awareness to City leadership, the public, and the media

The OEM has other specific roles in addition to leading the EOC, including incorporating winter preparedness into City planning efforts. The OEM's duty officer monitors weather and City department actions continuously; this and other information inform decisions on EOC activation. Coordination with the City's Communications Office and the National Weather Service is also provided.

Public Information

The OEM also provides public information in the form of winter weather preparedness tips, alerts, and warnings on Bellevue's website, as well as updates via social media. Visit www.bellevuewa.gov and search "Emergencies and Extreme Weather" to find the emergency weather home page. On this page the public can find:

- How to get assistance during weather emergencies
- Information on local impacts and the City's response
- How to get prepared for weather and other emergencies/disasters
- How to subscribe to automatic email or text alerts regarding emergency or extreme weather events

In addition, the public can find access to the City's real-time traffic map and traffic cameras by visiting the Transportation Department/Traffic Conditions page on the City's website.

Attachment

A. Snow Response Priorities Map