



DATE: November 4, 2019

TO: Mayor Chelminiak and City Councilmembers

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

SUBJECT: Winter Weather - Preparedness and Communications



Flooding

Ice and Snow

Landslides

Wind

Introduction

Bellevue experiences a wide range of weather during the winter season, including heavy rain, strong winds, and snow/ice events. A significant service Bellevue provides our residents is winter weather preparedness, response, and recovery efforts.

Preparedness, Response, and Recovery – One City Approach

Eligible staff from the Transportation, Utilities, Parks, and Finance and Asset Management Departments are trained in response and recovery activities prior to the winter season, with this year's training occurring in late October. **As of November 1, we have been winter weather ready.** The Transportation Department is lead for snow, ice, and wind events, and the Utilities Department is lead for flood events, with both departments receiving interdepartmental support.

The Fire Department's Office of Emergency Management (OEM) is able to quickly staff the Emergency Operations Center (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.

- Disseminate public information in the form of winter weather preparedness tips, alerts, and warnings.

Last Winter – Context

Bellevue and the region experienced a significant snow, ice, and cold event in February 2019. It should be noted that this event was extreme and not typical – an event we see on average about once every ten years (10 percent of winters). As presented to Council at the February 19, 2019 Study Session, Bellevue was able to respond to this extreme event with a massive staff effort that was effective in maintaining safety and mobility for our residents and businesses. One of the many challenges was snow removal on the residential streets in the higher elevations south of I-90 due to the reduced performance of deicing materials in the extreme cold. To improve, the Transportation Department has procured some new plow blades with steel bits (to supplement our stock of softer infrastructure-protecting rubber bits) to use on these residential streets where the risk to infrastructure is low. Another process improvement under consideration is better material (deicer and supplies) storage in the higher elevations south of I-90 to decrease travel and subsequently increase plow time.

Communication Efforts

An additional enhancement created due to feedback from the February 2019 snowstorm are new tools to communicate preparedness information to a broader range of residents.

This spring and summer, staff compiled a list of seven consistently used messages related to winter weather emergencies. The goal is to leverage these ready-to-go translated messages during a weather event through BellevueWA.gov and social media. The content, which touches on a variety of subjects from plowing routes to preventing carbon monoxide poisoning, is translated into the City's top five non-English languages: Spanish, Chinese, Korean, Russian and Vietnamese. The tips are available now on the City's ["Winter Cautions" webpage](#).

Further augmenting these coordinated efforts, the recently published *It's Your City* newsletter, sent to all 60,000-plus Bellevue addresses, contained the first ever Winter Weather Preparedness insert. This guide contains extensive information for our residents on how to get breaking news updates, report hazards, and request help during an emergency.

It also contains preparedness information specifically targeted for persons with a disability or mobility concerns, as well as addressing our snow and ice removal priority system.

The guide is in the process of being translated into the top five languages. It will be available at: BellevueWa.gov/prepare.

The Winter Weather Preparedness guide was produced by the Transportation, Fire/OEM, and City Manager's Office/ADA-Title VI Civil Rights Program offices.

Attachments

- A. Snow Response Priorities Map
- B. Winter Weather Preparedness Guide