

DATE: November 9, 2020

TO: Mayor Robinson and City Councilmembers

FROM: Chris Long, Interim Assistant Director, 452-6013
Transportation Department

SUBJECT: Winter Weather Preparedness and Response

Introduction

Bellevue experiences a wide range of weather during the winter season including heavy rains, strong winds, and snow/ice events. The seasonal forecast strongly indicates a La Niña weather pattern this winter. Early winter months (October – December) are anticipated to have above average precipitation and slightly above average temperatures followed by slightly below average temperatures through the rest of the winter (January - March). Although we consider seasonal forecasts, this information is used for awareness only as we consistently prepare to respond to weather events throughout the year. The shorter term (current to 14-day) forecasts are far more useful to execute equipment, material, and staff planning for weather related events.



Preparedness, Response, and Recovery – One City Approach

Eligible staff from Transportation, Utilities, Parks, and Finance and Asset Management (Facilities and Fleet) 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 are winter weather ready with a few new changes.

This year, our response to potential weather events faces unique constraints and challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite strict guidelines, we remain committed to maintaining the level of service our residents receive during any weather-related event. As we find ourselves in a complicated season of challenges, we take pride in how our teams rise to the occasion and find innovative ways to continue operations.

The following operational decisions have been made in order to ensure the continued safety of our staff during weather event response:

- Additional shifts will be staggered by one hour on both day and night shifts to maintain social distancing among the operators. Staff on out-going shifts will be required to clean and disinfect their vehicles used during their shift. Staff on the in-coming shift will remain in their personal vehicles in the parking lot until assigned to a duty vehicle by dispatch. They will perform standard vehicle inspection while awaiting their assignments. This measure will ensure cross-contamination between shifts is kept at a minimum.
- All in-person debriefing meetings will be suspended. Any pertinent shift updates and announcements will be transmitted over the UHF radio by the dispatchers.
- The annual pre-event weather response training has been converted from in-person classes to online classes. Weather responders will be required to watch all training videos on Bellevue's employee learning site.

Another change for 2020/2021 is the implementation of Automatic Vehicle Location (AVL) GPS Technology on a majority of the snow and ice fleet to obtain vehicle location data during winter response efforts. We are expecting the AVL system to help the City clear roads more efficiently resulting in improved safety for the traveling public. The collected data will also allow Transportation to develop a public-facing map with information on winter snow and ice road conditions in the near future.

Interdepartmental Support for Winter Weather Response

- Finance and Asset Management (Facilities and Fleet) is a critical department in winter weather response activities. Not only do they address facility needs, they also service vehicles and equipment before, during and after snow events.
- The Parks Department provides additional support personnel and leads snow removal efforts on Fire Station and Hospital properties.
- The Utilities Department provides personnel for operation of snowplows, to address water main breaks and to mitigate blocked storm drains and sewer backups.

The Office of Emergency Management (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 personnel during significant winter weather events to assist with the coordination of public safety announcements.

Ice and Snow Response Management

Bellevue's topography presents a unique challenge for ice and snow response. Since many ice and snow events occur only at higher elevations, resources are usually enough 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 ability to get plows into neighborhoods during City-wide events is influenced by event intensity and time of day/day of week.

Priority of Response

Life Safety
Property Damage
Mobility

Key Operational Objectives

Clear streets of snow, ice, water, and debris
Restore mobility and assist other City operations
Provide information to the public and City leadership

Lead

Snow/Ice – Transportation
Flood – Utilities
Wind – Transportation

The public can obtain a real-time view of road conditions during a winter weather event using the City's traffic map and camera page on the following website: <https://trafficmap.bellevuewa.gov/>. We anticipate the public will be excited to see that we now offer full motion video on this page (officially launched on October 30).

The public can also signup for extreme weather emergency alert via email or text notification at: <https://bellevuewa.gov/city-government/departments/city-managers-office/communications/emergencies-and-extreme-weather>.

Summary

Bellevue devotes significant resources to winter weather preparedness and response with a coordinated, One City approach. For questions, please contact Chris Long at CLong@bellevuewa.gov.

Attachment

A. Snow Response Priorities Map