

Residents dig out after foot of wet snow

Written by Elizabeth Barrett

Wednesday, 04 November 2009 22:29 - Last Updated Wednesday, 04 November 2009 22:36



Third snow in October cancels school, closes downtown businesses.

After more than a foot of heavy, wet snow smothered the city Thursday night and Friday morning, residents concentrated on digging out.

School was cancelled Friday and only a handful of businesses were open downtown.

The weight of the snow ripped branches from trees—repeating a similar scenario that happened Oct. 22 when up to eight inches of the white stuff blanketed the city.

Although the sun eventually emerged Friday and dried downtown sidewalks, the annual Munchkin Masquerade—for young trick or treaters—was rescheduled until Monday afternoon.

Parking was limited downtown because of snow piled in the middle of city streets.

City crews began grading emergency routes about 5 a.m. Friday and plowed open driving lanes downtown.

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Clearing residential streets was next.

Shane Gruber, city services director, said officials decided to mound snow in the middle of some city streets because it was heavy and had started to melt.

Saturday morning, Gruber said the street crew worked from 4-6 a.m. pulling snow from curbs into the center of downtown streets and clearing roadways throughout the city.

By Wednesday (today), Gruber predicted most of the snow would be melted from city streets.



On Friday, Gruber said a lot of people tried to drive vehicles in deep snow and became stuck.

“We had to plow around them and were having a heck of a time moving snow in our own equipment because the snow was so heavy and deep,” he said. “If it happens again, just stay home.”

Although it was slow work because of the weight of the snow, Gruber said the biggest issue was broken branches that littered roadways and curbs.

“Branches knocked down service to several houses,” he said, noting that a couple of light poles were also brought down by weighty snow.

This week, Gruber said the city crew is trimming damaged branches over streets and city right of way which is the area between sidewalks and curbs.

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Gruber said the city will pick up limbs piled next to curbs from street trees but asked property owners not to add branches from other trees.

Branches and limbs can be taken to the city tree lot which is filling up.

“If you haul your own branches, make sure you dump them on the pile instead of dropping them near the entrance,” he said.

Although many trees have been damaged by the October storms, Gruber said he thinks most trees will survive.

“Windstorms cleaned them out in 1990s and we pruned a bunch after that so there haven’t been as many dead branches,” he said. “It’s not as bad as it could have been.”

Gruber, who’s worked for the city for 16 years, said this is the most snow he remembers in October.

Despite overtime and fuel costs in clearing streets, he said enough funds for snow removal have been budgeted so far.

GOOD SAMARITAN

Vivian Haynes, 62, began sawing damaged branches Sunday afternoon around her 2121 Ave. F home.
That was after she bought oil for her chainsaw from Orscheln's Farm and Home.
“I was sawing away and a young man showed up and asked if I could use some help,” Haynes said.
While Haynes sawed, the man carried and stacked tree limbs for removal alongside the curb.
“He worked three hours for me and wouldn't take a dime,” she said Monday. “He was my knight in shining armor.”
Haynes said the man was the husband of a woman who works at Orscheln's who called her after seeing Haynes do the job.
“He was a Good Samaritan who did a wonderful job.”

City crews plan to start picking up leaves piled next to curbs next week and will work on clearing streets up until Thanksgiving.

More than 1,100 homes were without power between North Platte and Cozad for part or most of

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Friday, according to Dawson Public Power District officials.

“A combination of ice on the power lines and winds caused lines to bat together and gallop,” said Marsha Banzhaf, DPPD public relations coordinator. “When lines gallop, they swing wildly which can break insulators, cross arms or even poles.”

Around Gothenburg, Banzhaf said power was restored by about 5:30 p.m. Friday.

She said DPPD officials appreciated help from farmers in the area when trucks got stuck on mud and snow on country roads.

On Highway 30, Banzhaf said she heard an unofficial report of a truck that became stuck and another of a DPPD worker who had to drive from Gothenburg to Brady because he couldn't turn around because of the heavy snow.

Restoring power to customers at Jeffrey Lake was challenging, she said, because of numerous trees and rough terrain.

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