

Let it snow, let it blow, let it snow

Written by Elizabeth Barrett
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City crew up early to clear streets.

Early mornings and lots of coffee are the city's secrets to thoroughfares cleared of snow by the time most people venture from their homes.

At least in Corey Cooper's view.

Cooper works for Gothenburg's water and sewer department.

Street department employee Gary Suhr is the oldest in the city's four public works departments that include street, electrical, water and sewer and wastewater treatment.

Suhr, who's removed snow from the city for nearly 25 years, described his 12 coworkers as like a well-oiled machine when they remove snow.

"We all work together," he said. "Shane will plow and Bruce is always willing to help."

Shane Gruber is city services director and Bruce Clymer is city administrator.

The crew took a break at the city shop Christmas Eve morning from clearing about five inches of the white stuff that fell Dec. 23.

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Another two inches were added Thursday and Friday with recorded wind gusts of up to 59 mph that caused drifting throughout the city and visibility problems on state roads and highways and Interstate 80.

HOLIDAY STORM

Although Gothenburg was spared a predicted foot of snow last week, wind gusts up to 59 mph and about a half foot of snow prevented many families from gathering together for the Christmas holiday.

Snow began falling Wednesday with winds picking up Thursday and Friday.

Mayer Joyce Hudson declared a snow emergency Tuesday and school was cut short a day Wednesday giving students an extra day for break.

Meteorologists predict a dry but chilly rest of the week locally with temperatures climbing into the upper 30s on Saturday.

During the break, Gruber attributed efficient removal to the fact that “everyone knows what they’re doing.”

“We work together and just have a good crew,” Gruber said. “We may have a slim crew but we’ve got the whole town covered in about six hours.”

Cooper said cooperation by the public in keeping their vehicles off the street during a snowstorm and not driving around while the crew is working is also key.

When snow is forecast, the crew begins preparation the day before.

“We have the plows on our trucks and the sand in the boxes,” Suhr explained. “We make sure all the equipment has fuel and the blades are in good shape.”

Gruber said they were ready for a foot or more of snow before the last storm but it hit areas south and east harder.

Suhr said the emergency snow route, 10 major arterials in town, is cleaned first followed by the streets around the school and the downtown area and finally residential streets.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Gothenburg's snow removal crew had several suggestions on how to make their job easier.

■ Wait to snow blow driveways until the city crew has cleared your street.

■ Blow or scoop snow into your yard instead of the street.

■ Keep your vehicle off the street if possible. If not, park on one side of the street so snow can be piled in one lane instead of two.

■ Don't drive around looking at the aftermath of storms while crews are working. Keep out of their way.

