



Preparing for
Emergencies



Report SW/10/07
Name of Incident: Severe Weather
Date & time of update 7 January 2010 as at 1700hrs

If you have any vulnerable people that you are concerned about or other areas of concern in your area e.g. power cuts etc that you believe we ought to know about please let us know via Streetcare (01635 519080).

A further update as to what the Council is doing and planning for will come out later as more information becomes available to us. However the links on the WBC website front page - Severe Weather Information section - are useful regarding schools, waste, libraries etc.

The main issues for the Council at the moment continue to be maintaining the main roads of the Highways network and ensuring all our community care clients are looked after. We have also been working on some town centre pavements and looking ahead to issues for the future due to the likelihood for this cold spell to continue for some time.

As indicated yesterday following the snow, temperatures plummeted last night - it was as low as -16C last night at RAF Benson in Oxfordshire. As a result the roads, including the priority roads in West Berkshire area which, although gritted last night and this morning, due to very low temperatures the salt has difficulty working and are now likely to be very icy. Indeed the gritters in some areas were finding it difficult. Therefore the advice is:

- if you don't need to drive then please don't. In addition prepare yourself and your vehicle (clear all the vehicle of snow - when it slides forward onto your windscreen from the roof it can be very dangerous to you and other users).
- if you are considering walking please again prepare yourself - warm clothes, practical footwear and if possible something bright/reflective on top to make sure you can be seen by other road users.

The good news is that today there may be a slight let up in the conditions with a possibility that temperatures may rise above freezing. However this on top of the freezing conditions will add to the icy conditions. There is currently more freezing conditions and possibly more snow due later in the week or early next week.

Weather

More information can be sought on the BBC website however the overview is as follows:

The low temperatures will continue and are likely to continue for a further 10 days. There may be some flurries of snow but with the exception of Sunday when there may be a maximum of 5cm there is not expected to be much snow. However the winds are expected to increase on Friday from the N/NE so this along with the snow may result in existing snow drifting.

Highways & Transport Update

The main priority is that we are continuing to grit the A&B roads. This will continue for the foreseeable future.

The Department of Transport has now set a 'salt cell' to coordinate the distribution of the salt across the UK. As a result of this the Council has been advised that a delivery of 875 tonnes is due to be delivered to our depot over the next few days.

If this delivery arrives it is hoped, subject to weather, that we can start treating the roads that are currently untreated and in so doing replenish the grit bins. We will update when this will start as it is all reliant on the delivery arriving.

The transportation team in the mean time have been using all the 4x4 vehicles and drivers they have plus a few others to support the community care team, supporting vulnerable clients and providing the hot meals service.

Schools

Many Schools have already decided to close tomorrow. However many are now looking to reopen either tomorrow or on Monday. Depending on the weather this may be on a limited basis – children sitting exams etc. we are working with the education service with a view to supporting schools if we can and providing advice. As a result if you have children at our schools then I would remind if have not heard from the school directly then please a) listen to BBC Radio Berkshire, Heart FM or Newbury Sound b) check the school website c) contact the school d) check our website - many school details are already there as reported yesterday and do this BEFORE setting out.

Community Care

The community care team are working hard to ensure all our clients are looked after.

Waste

There were no collections today and the waste/recycle centres were closed. This will be case again tomorrow. Plans are now being put in place to recover the waste, subject to the weather next week.

Grounds Maintenance

The team from countryside have been working hard to help clear paths in Newbury Northbrook Street and Thatcham, Broadway. Tomorrow they are going to do the underpasses in Newbury and move to other areas. It should be noted they are focusing on town centres at the moment and cannot clear all the footpaths so please take care when walking.

Other Services

The ambulance service continues to have difficulties in rural areas as a result you are reminded to only call 999 in emergencies.

Thames Water are managing to maintain supply and demand at the moment. There are currently no excessive bursts. However, this may change when the thaw eventually starts.

Further Advice

In addition, due to the conditions please heed the following advice:

- Dial 999 only in emergencies
- Call NHS direct instead of the ambulance unless it is an emergency
- Be aware of large amounts of snow on high buildings and trees coming off them as the snow melts and becomes heavy - this may be in slab type form.
- Be aware of icicles on buildings as any thaw takes place, when they fall they can be like knives.
- Don't walk on frozen ponds and lakes
- Be prepared for power outages and careful with naked flames and heating systems that have not been used for a while or maintained properly
- Be prepared for burst pipes as any thaw starts.

We would also reiterate the request to being a good neighbour making sure everyone is OK.

For further information on the situation, guidance and advice from other agencies please see the links on the Severe Weather Information on the front of our website.

Further Information

For More information regarding the weather forecast can be viewed on the met office website:

http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/weather/uk/se/se_forecast_weather.html

For more information about major road network, safe driving, preparing your car and having emergency kit in your car please have a look at the Highways Agency website.

<http://www.highways.gov.uk/>

For Thames Valley Police press releases.

<http://www.thamesvalley.police.uk/newsevents/newsevents-pressreleases.htm>

In addition please look at the West Berkshire Councils Website:

<http://www.westberks.gov.uk/>