

Dear friends and neighbors,

As I know many are frustrated and concerned about the lingering effects of Saturday's snow storm, I am forwarding to you an overview of the report and information that was released at last night's council work session. Please be patient and know public works is working hard to get things back to normal.

Also, we will be reviewing our practices and policies--including how we get information out to residents--after we finish dealing with this storm. As with all such major events we expect to learn from adversity and be better able to handle such events in the future. However, we really cannot change game plans in the middle of an emergency, so please hold your ideas until we get out of this situation and then come share them with me and/or the council at upcoming council meetings when we have the time to genuinely rethink our strategies.

#### REPORT:

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We are making reasonably good progress dealing with the aftermath of a snow storm of historic proportions.

The area received between 16 and 20 inches. In comparison we normally consider a 3-6 inch snow storm a major event and are the type we plan for (this is typical of planning throughout the area). We are in effect cleaning up from what we would consider 3 storms that hit simultaneously. Another way to look at it, is we received in a 24 hour period approximately what we would expect for a whole winter's worth of snow storms--NOAA average for Washington is 16.6 inches.

In a snow emergency our first goal is always to keep primary roads passable for emergency vehicles and all other traffic. This was always maintained throughout the recent storm, but unlike other major storms in recent memory, it was absolutely all we could do to keep the primaries open during the worst of the snow. What this strategy does, is guarantee that every resident is no more than two blocks from a passable street should a medical, fire or personal safety emergency occur, and in such a situation public works could drop all else and get an ambulance, fire truck or police cruiser into a given location.

Plowing and salting secondary residential roads/residential streets come next. Residents may have noticed that plows were nearly completely absent from the secondary roads on Saturday during the height of the event, this was because the primary roads required all of our attention. A side effect of this is that it is now all the harder to cleanup the secondary roads. We are also having a particularly difficult time dealing with hills and dead-end streets, as such places leave us very little space to pile an entire year/winter worth of snow.

Additional problems we faced/are facing:

- 1) The local salt supply (we have cooperative agreements with College Park and Hyattsville) ran out Saturday. We resupplied Monday morning and are again working at full capacity.
- 2) We have had equipment problems with several trucks and plow both routine and also caused by excessively heavy work load. The equipment we have is purchased based on more typical snow events, so the 1 1/2 foot of snow is frankly more than the equipment is designed to handle and therefore we have had more breakdowns than would likely been the case in a more typical snow event;
- 3) We have to revisit areas plowed (primary and secondary streets) due to residents digging out their cars by piling snow into the streets while trying to dig themselves out.
- 4) Refreezing at night.

From Friday morning, until end of operations Sunday night, we have put 396 staff hours into our snow effort, by 9 persons and put all 17 lbs/tons of salt on our roads that we had available. (Note that staff is working near double shifts).

Residents can assist the cleanup effort by:

1. Moving snow off the road while digging out their automobiles and driveways. This does require more effort, but it will mean your street is back to normal sooner!
2. To the degree possible move autos off the street to driveways, or perhaps nearby open parking. This allows for much quicker and more efficient cleanup.

**For assistance call 301-864-1803 or 240-237-5104**

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Vernon Archer, Mayor  
Town of Riverdale Park, Maryland