

Media Advisory – Dec. 11, 2009

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Road crews standing by, ready for bad weather

Successful methods used last year in place again

Snohomish County road crews are standing by and ready to tackle snow should weather predictions through the middle of next week hold true.

Current forecasts call for light snow beginning Sunday and possibly freezing rain or ice before turning into rain Tuesday morning.

“We successfully attacked the accumulating snow last year, keeping roads cleared and safe for drivers,” Snohomish County Executive Aaron Reardon said Friday. “We’re ready to do the same this year.”

During snowstorms in December 2008, more than 160 county employees put in 12-hour shifts during a three-week period, successfully plowing and de-icing more than 50,000 road miles, sometimes with snow four feet high. These efforts kept primary county roads and many secondary roads open with few – and short-lived – road closures.

This year, the Public Works Department has stockpiled 10,000 tons of sand mixed with salt at three locations throughout the county and has 20 sander/plow trucks mounted and ready. Another 20 trucks can be up and running within hours if needed.

The county also routinely de-ices roads prior to storm events, and will utilize 25,000 gallons of de-icer as necessary this winter. Drivers will be on standby throughout the weekend and will be on the road early Monday ahead of the morning commute.

“There is a concerted effort here at Snohomish County to have the main roads completely clear of snow and ice,” said Steve Thomsen, the county’s Public Works director. “From there, we branch out to secondary roads and neighborhoods.”

Unincorporated Snohomish County is divided into 12 zones that are actively managed during snow and ice events. The county also contracts with several cities to provide snow and ice control on city streets.

Should road conditions worsen, drivers are urged to use caution.

“When the roads get bad, it’s best to stay home if you can,” Reardon said. “But if you must travel, do so carefully.”

If you must drive, follow these basic tips:

- Have your car winterized and make sure it is working properly.

- Install good winter tires.
- Tire chains and/or all-wheel drive may be necessary in severe conditions.
- Keep a shovel, windshield scraper and blankets inside your vehicle.
- Maintain at least a half tank of gas at all times.
- Check road conditions before departing.
- Let others know of your route and your estimated time of arrival.
- Allow extra time and extra distance between vehicles.

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