

MONTESANO MAYOR THANKS CITIZENS, BUSINESSES & STAFF

I want to express my personal thanks and appreciation to the citizens, businesses and city staff for their dedication, patience and spirit in dealing with the recent Arctic Blast. Recent history suggests this is an event that comes along about every 10 years: similar ice/snow storms occurred in 1990 and in 1996.

The General Fund Budget we were handed for 2008 did not include anything for snow removal or winter street clearing. This is normal for Montesano, since we usually have minor amounts of snow, with very short duration. Emergency expenses are not budgeted for annually, and with no "reserves," our budget was bare.

We were not alone in our pain. Many cities both big and small were affected like Montesano. I was impressed with how many of our city households went into the storm season prepared and made investments such as 4-wheel drive vehicles, snow shovels, chains and studded snow tires. Not only did most folks take care of themselves, they also were good neighbors and helped out friends and family.

My observation was that those businesses that stayed open, plowed their parking lots, and shoveled sidewalks, were appreciated and patronized by customers because they provided an open, warm invitation.

City operations were about maintaining "essential services": access to city hall, police, fire, EMS, water and sewer. No city staff missed scheduled work. Over 100,000 lbs. of sand were put on streets by the public works crew the first week after the Festival of Lights to keep icy streets and intersections safe. Citizens slowed down their driving or stayed home to be safe.

After the snow built up on Sunday, December 21, the city public works staff began clearing public parking lots and intersections, cleaning sidewalks, opening storm drains, and helping people who were stranded. Staff came back from vacation, went to work early, and worked overtime. By the end of Christmas week, most city streets were cleared and many of the snow piles were removed.

The weight of the snow load collapsed a third of the east side of our water reservoir roof (which survived the 2007 storm). With quick action by the water department, they kept us in water from wells, bypassing the reservoir and thus have avoided a boil advisory.

The police were operational at all times due to the 4-wheel drive Ford Explorer units. The Fire/EMS and volunteers were responding as usual and with dedication to any emergencies with tire chains and multiple Aid units.

There were several small business entrepreneurs who made themselves available at a cost to assist with snow plowing where needed. Stan Vessey volunteered his backhoe at no cost to help with street snow removal. Grays Harbor County, as our largest employer, was also a good neighbor by clearing their parking areas and sidewalks and assisted the city by plowing the main streets. I was also very thankful we were not without power, so many thanks to our dedicated PUD!

It was indeed a white Christmas in Montesano. It was also a true community in action. In my mind, it was the true expression of the spirit of the Christmas season. ...the love and giving of our time and talents and sharing with others. I was very proud of the entire city: citizens, businesses and staff. Nice job and sincere thanks.

Yours,
Ron Schillinger
Montesano Mayor