

# A rainy, cold and windy challenge to Bellevue

## City responds to stormy events

By Grant Degginger

The calendar says that it's January, but what a winter it already has been. Heavy rains were followed by an unprecedented wind storm and then two significant snow storms.

City staff logged countless hours before, during and after each event providing essential public safety, utility and street repairs and assistance for people all over the Bellevue.

The city's Emergency Operations Center was activated and began the important task of coordinating the city's response to the storm. The paramount objective was to protect lives. No fatalities occurred in Bellevue during the storm or its aftermath. Emergency declarations were signed, which enabled contracts for debris removal and other services to be immediately executed.

Police worked to keep the streets safe — a major task when so many intersections initially were without operating street lights. Police also assisted street and utility crews to get where they needed to remove downed trees from streets and to get Puget Sound Energy crews to the places where they could repair downed power lines. City utilities crews worked around the clock to keep the pump stations that operate our water and

sewer systems running on portable generators.

Our 911 Call Center took an unprecedented number of calls and our fire department responded to over 600 incidents over the first two days of the storm.

The city immediately teamed up with the Red Cross to open emergency shelters at the North Bellevue Community Center, Bellevue High School and later at the Highland Community Center. The shelters provided hot meals, a warm place to sleep and a much appreciated sense of community for many people. About 400 Bellevue residents took advantage of the North Bellevue shelter. They were joined by residents of other nearby cities who also needed assistance. Recently, I received a letter from a 75-year old resident who lives alone and really appreciated that the shelter was available for her and other seniors who lived nearby. Thanks go out to the many city staff, including Deputy Mayor John Chelminiak and councilmembers Claudia Balducci and Conrad Lee, who joined me in helping out at the shelters.

The city contacted the many assisted-living residences to see if their needs were being met. We also reached out through our neighborhood organizations to



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find those needing help. Even the postal service helped deliver flyers. I have heard many heartwarming stories of people checking in with their neighbors to help each other in those first difficult days after the storm.

In the storm's aftermath, over 600 residents have taken advantage of the opportunity to drop off over 1,800 cubic yards of storm debris for free at Pacific Topsoils. This service will continue until Sunday, January 28. If you have questions about any debris remaining in the right of way in your neighborhood, contact the Utilities Department at (425) 452-7840.

We don't know what else Mother Nature has in store for us this winter. We've learned that each of us needs to be ready with an emergency plan. Hopefully, the kids have enjoyed their last snow day for this school year. But just in case, the sand trucks and plows will be ready for the next storm.

*Grant Degginger is mayor of Bellevue.*

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