



FEMA

## Lessons Learned Information Sharing

LLIS.gov

Sharing Information  
Enhancing Preparedness  
Strengthening Homeland Security

### LESSON LEARNED

## Emergency Management: Establishing Procedures for Priority Snow Plow Routes

### SUMMARY

Local emergency managers should develop and maintain a list of priority plowing areas within their jurisdictions. A copy of the list should be kept at the emergency operations center (EOC). Managers should also establish procedures for requesting priority plow services and for tracking the completion of requests.

### DESCRIPTION

From December 13 to 27, 2008, the Puget Sound region of western Washington experienced an extended period of winter weather. Seattle received 11.3 inches of snow during the period, 9.1 inches higher than the city's regular December snowfall amounts. Continuous accumulation of snow, coupled with freezing temperatures, turned compacted snow into ice. This resulted in road closures, treacherous driving conditions, limited Metro bus service, and school and business closures throughout the city. The Seattle Department of Transportation (DOT) coordinated response and recovery efforts with the Seattle EOC as well as with police, utilities, and public health agencies. Overall, the storm cost Seattle an estimated \$3.4 million in damages and response and recovery efforts, including snow removal, power restoration, and the delivery of critical medications and healthcare services to stranded individuals.



**Seattle Skyline during the 2008 Storms**

Seattle DOT plowed and sanded over 1,530 road miles multiple times over the 2-week period. To accomplish this, Seattle DOT crews worked 12-hour shifts, maintaining 24-hour plowing operations. During this time, DOT officials received multiple requests for priority plowing in order to maintain access to critical facilities, including the city jail, blood banks, police precincts, key public transit areas, and hospitals. However, Seattle DOT could not fulfill many of these requests due to limited manpower and resources. As a result, access to many critical facilities remained obstructed, particularly in the healthcare sector. Staff members from local hospitals and other healthcare organizations experienced difficulty getting to and from work; patients requiring dialysis treatments could not access the appropriate treatment facilities. The Puget Sound Blood Center also experienced continual problems maintaining access to its facility. To address these issues, the *City of Seattle*

*December 2008 Winter Storm After-Action Report and Corrective Action Plan* suggests that the Seattle DOT work with the Seattle Department of Emergency Management to better define and prioritize the city's plowing needs.

Local emergency managers should develop and maintain a list of priority plowing areas within their jurisdictions. A copy of the list should be kept at the EOC. Managers should also establish procedures for requesting priority plow services and for tracking the completion of requests.

#### **CITATION**

Seattle Office of Emergency Management. *City of Seattle December 2008 Winter Storm: After-Action Report and Corrective Action Plan*. Feb 2009.

<https://www.llis.dhs.gov/docdetails/details.do?contentID=35495>

#### **DISCLAIMER**

*Lessons Learned Information Sharing (LLIS.gov)* is the US Department of Homeland Security/Federal Emergency Management Agency's national online network of lessons learned, best practices, and innovative ideas for the emergency response and homeland security communities. The Web site and its contents are provided for informational purposes only, without warranty or guarantee of any kind, and do not represent the official positions of the US Department of Homeland Security. For more information on *LLIS.gov*, please email [feedback@llis.dhs.gov](mailto:feedback@llis.dhs.gov) or visit [www.llis.gov](http://www.llis.gov).