



FEMA

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LESSON LEARNED

Emergency Resources: Ensuring the Availability of Emergency Vehicles for Use by Human Services Personnel

SUMMARY

Governmental agencies responsible for maintaining public vehicles should ensure the availability of all-wheel drive or chained vehicles for use by human services case management workers during prolonged snowfall events or other emergencies. This will ensure case management workers can reach their clients.

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 Emergency Operations Center, 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

During the storms, the Seattle Human Services Department (HSD) attempted to maintain its normal in-home case management services, which serve thousands of the city's citizens. However, by the third day of the storms, dangerous road conditions prevented many case workers from accessing their clients. To address this issue, the Seattle Department of Fleets and Facilities (FFD) loaned two 4x4 vehicles to the case management workers for use until the Seattle DOT could restore normal road conditions. While this proved successful, the Seattle after-action report

The Seattle HSD funds and operates programs and services that meet the needs of vulnerable populations in the community, including families and individuals with low incomes, children, domestic violence victims, seniors, and persons with disabilities. For more information, please see the [HSD website](#).

recommends that FFD establish a formal agreement with HSD to secure chained or all-wheel drive vehicles for use by case management workers during prolonged snowfall events or similar emergencies.

Governmental agencies responsible for maintaining public vehicles should ensure the availability of all-wheel drive or chained vehicles for use by human services case management workers during prolonged snowfall events or other emergencies. This will ensure case management workers can reach their clients.

The FFD manages the city of Seattle's non-utility real estate portfolio; oversees the design, construction and occupancy of city facilities; maintains city buildings; and purchases, maintains and repairs the city's emergency response vehicles. For more information, please see the [FFD website](#).

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>

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