



NEWS RELEASE

Town of Culpeper
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News Release from the Culpeper County Department of Emergency Services

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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County and Town of Culpeper officials have been busy fielding emergency calls since the snow began falling Friday afternoon.

Unofficially, about 19 inches of snow had fallen in town before tapering off late this afternoon.

By 3:30 p.m., the Culpeper Public Safety Communications Center had received 170 calls for service, with 39 of them for medical emergencies.

Since last night, Virginia National Guard soldiers have transported people to the shelters opened by the county last night. The soldiers have been using a large truck and a Humvee to transport citizens seeking shelter. The town shelter at St. Stephens Episcopal Church on North East Street had 12 people using the facility. The second shelter at the Salem Volunteer Fire Department had no people overnight, but as of this afternoon several people were headed there. The fire department lost power last night but continues to operate on auxiliary power.

The Town of Culpeper Light and Power Department was working this afternoon to restore electric service to customers after a large cedar tree and several smaller trees fell into a power line in the Oaklawn subdivision. The outage is affecting Culpeper Regional Hospital, which is operating on emergency power. Electric crews were able to restore power to some customers in the south end of town after isolating the problem. Crews hope to restore power shortly after 5 p.m.

Late this afternoon, approximately 3,500 REC electric customers were still without power in Culpeper County, county officials said.

Local officials remind people to not call 9-1-1 or the state police #77 unless there is an emergency. These emergency numbers need to be free for true emergencies where immediate assistance is needed either for police or fire and rescue response.

Town Public Works crews have been plowing the town's main arteries and collector streets, but the amount of snow and drifting caused by strong winds have hampered cleanup efforts.

Public Works Director Bobby Thornhill said the main roads were passable.

"That doesn't mean clear," said Thornhill.

Town crews began working 12-hour shifts once the snow started falling. The snowplows will be focusing efforts on the main arteries of Route 29 business, North Main Street, Sperryville Pike, Germanna Highway, along with Laurel Street and Sunset Lane leading to Culpeper Regional Hospital. Collector streets, such as Old Brandy Road and the three east and west streets in the downtown core area, also are receiving primary attention.

Secondary streets and subdivisions will not see snowplow activity until the main roads are passable and clear. The wet heavy snow is taking longer to plow because it is more difficult to move than the light fluffy snow we experienced during the last few snow storms.

Two town dump trucks broke down, but the town was able to hire two contractors to assist.

Town crews are responsible for clearing 63 miles of roads of snow. Officials are asking citizens to be patient as the crews will be working 'round the clock until all the streets have been plowed and treated.

Besides plowing snow, town public works crews had to cut up and remove several fallen pine trees that blocked Madison Road for a short time.

However, the plea from law enforcement officials, urging people to stay home and off the roads seems to have paid off.

"So far people are using commonsense," said Clark. "They are staying off the roads."

Culpeper police reported no accidents, but police did assist several motorists who became stuck in snow or disabled.

Culpeper Public Safety Communications Center Director Steve Basnett said dispatchers have been busy taking calls. His staff fielded an estimated 800 to 1,000 calls since the storm began many of those involving power outages.

If you lose power, call your electric provider, **not** the Culpeper County Public Safety Communications Center to report an outage, he said.

Culpeper County Emergency Services Director Tom Williams asked motorists to stay off the roads. With dropping temperatures, roads will freeze, making driving more hazardous and extremely dangerous.

“If you don’t need to go out, please stay home,” he said.

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