

Snowmageddon

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This photo was making the rounds late yesterday, showing (a.) Raleigh's heavy snowfall, (b.) disabled or abandoned vehicles that soon littered many roadways, and (c.) at least one vehicle burning, apparently as the result of a motor-vehicle accident. [[See WRAL story](#) about the photo, taken by Lindsay Webb with her iphone.] Engine 24 was dispatched, no idea on the run time or additional units. Fire department responded to quite a few vehicle accidents, though it didn't seem like the usual gazillion. Maybe vehicles were all moving too slowly. Didn't hear any or many tree down or line down calls. Maybe they were held at dispatch?

The city provided these updates in press releases:

Today:

The Raleigh-Wake Emergency Communications answered more than 2100 calls between 12:30 p.m. and 6:15 p.m. Wednesday. The average day this time of year is approximately 2360 calls for an entire day. The majority of the calls were for minor property damage accidents, for requests for assistance or advice about traffic.

Raleigh Police report that 92 motorist accidents were reported between 1 p.m. Wednesday and 3:30 a.m. today.

Yesterday:

The Raleigh Police Department Field Operations personnel will be supported by the Special Operations Division throughout the event. Community officers from every district have been reassigned from regular duties to assist with crashes and stranded motorists. All RPD officers, including detectives, will have their uniforms ready in the event of a larger-scale event.

Raleigh Fire Department stations will be available as rest areas to City personnel working during the storm.

Raleigh had one working fire, 4324 Presley Court, Raleigh. Squad 15, Engines 11, 27, 22, , Ladder 2 and 5, Rescue 1 (among others) on run card. Upgraded to working fire while units were en route, I think. Radio on direct channel, due to VIPER unavailable perhaps? The dispatchers were talking about unavailability of radio channels.

Bay Leaf operated a command post and implemented an IAP, after stranded motorists began arriving at Station 2, due to the impassability of Creedmoor Road. (Working on inferences from radio traffic here.) They had thirty or forty or some people at the station at one time.

The city and some (all?) county departments switched to single-engine responses soon after the flakes began falling. Heard a lot of chatter by fire departments advising each other about road conditions. Many probably performed service calls, such as Bay Leaf, which did some shuttling of people. Probably from roadways to their station, but, again, that's all inference.

What are your stories? Visit me on Facebook (personal page), for a discussion on "how did this happen"? We'll excerpt the highlights here, later.



I listened up yesterday afternoon for several hours. Dispatch did an amazing job!

Raleigh Fire and Police and all Wake County Fire Departments and Wake SO deputies were outstanding. No hollering on the radios. No over excited voices.

These men and women who worked yesterday deserve a pat on the back.

Now as for the general public...why on earth were people on the roads past 11 a.m.?

This idea of well... it ain't bad or I can drive in this stuff was beyond stupid.

I understand people have to work... but past 11 a.m.?

How much more warning do you need folks? I don't want to hear we underestimated the storm... Really?

Pathetic to put those men and women in Public Safety lives on the line because you weren't smart enough to get off the roads.

The last thing we need was another person lose their life like the Dallas Firefighter did.

That was 1000% preventable.

And so was this fiasco.

Buckwheat - 02/13/14 - 11:06

I encountered some folks on the roads yesterday...and they were upset. I spent a little time talking to them as we were getting some of the messes straightened out. A lot of them thought it was stupid that they be on the roads in all of that, but many have 45-90 minute commutes and their employers did not release them until after 12:00 – 13:00. I know that there are employers out there that will dock people's pay if they don't come in if the employer is 'open'. Others face a 'write up' if they don't show up if the workplace is 'open', no matter what we in public safety, or the governor's office, say. Sad state.

But, at least around these parts, everyone eventually got to where they were going, or at least got somewhere.

So, for the next time (and yes, there will be a next time), I have one word for everyone- patience. A lot of the problems I saw yesterday were due to a lack of patience more than lack of ability.

DJ - 02/13/14 - 11:24

I'll admit to falling victim to #1 and #2. Working for a company that didn't officially close (either yesterday or today) didn't help in getting ppl out of the office, and working in a room with no windows doesn't help you judge how bad it is outside.

DJ is certainly correct, slow and patient were the way to go. Although my normal commute from RTP up the 147 back to Orange Co took 3 1/2 hours instead of the more typical 30-40 minutes not rushing it, leaving plenty of braking room and not going bumper-to-bumper up or down inclines saved me from the issues I noticed happening all around.

Paul - 02/13/14 - 13:32

I will say that the fire on Wednesday was a first for me.... I've never had to put hose on the truck to take back to the fire station to thaw the couplings so we could repack it...

Brandon - 02/16/14 - 20:35

I concur with you Mike, the roads were passable in most spots well into the normal rush hour. Just volume, lack of skill, and bald tires. I encountered an absolute mess Northbound on Barwell Road, with southbound cars spun out trying to climb a curving hill. There was a bypassing subdivision conveniently at the base of the hill, but I doubt most folks can drive without GPS these days. I found myself pushing 13 people by hand to clear the gridlock, and had to argue with a number of folks that they were not going to make that hill (We're not talking 4x4s here, but cars like Carollas and a Mustang). We finally opened up the gridlock at the hill and I find that some eager folks had decided to turn Barwell into a two lane southbound road.

I know most folks haven't encountered this type of weather, or been in situations where they've lost traction. I would say 90% of all of the stuck vehicles I encountered came from jumping on the gas, having bad tires, or poor route planning.

A side question, are those new RPD SUVs four wheel drive? The Tahoe units don't appear to be based on ground clearance, but I haven't a clue what to look for in the new Explorers.

PJ - 02/16/14 - 23:48

Even though it wasn't quite as bad as 2005, it didn't seem far off. The difference was the schools were closed. Everybody still seemed to leave work all at the same time. Although there are many reasons. I'd estimate that the two chief reasons were 1) profound lack of skill at driving for the conditions and 2) profound lack of knowledge about alternate routes to get from point A to B. I'll also surmise that point 1 is exacerbated by an apparent lack of awareness of what kinds of tires are worth a poop in such conditions. And yes, 1st gear is an amazing thing if you realize that you have it in an automatic. I was on an EMS call on 6 forks (when 15 got the fire call) soon after the gridlock formed and the ambulance never made it. Luckily a couple EMS chiefs (SUVs) happened by and marked on the scene to help. The looks from passers-by (after abandoning their cars) while we were treating our patient comical.

It seems too that there are always comparisons to cities further north this time of year. A big difference to me is that NYC, Philly, Boston, Chicago, DC, etc. have good public transit systems that allow those cities to function in the winter. Raleigh's public transit is essentially non-existent. Busses are vulnerable to the snow where an underground isn't. Atlanta is an extreme example because they get virtually no snow, and is the prime example of uncontrolled suburban sprawl so they get shut down during their rare winter weather (coupled with the lack of experience that that comes with). SpRawleigh isn't far behind Hotlanta on the downhill slide to the same fate.

Bob - 02/17/14 - 18:26

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