

Dedication Helped Portland Weather a Storm Public servants cleared roads and trees

More than a week of wind, snow and ice hit the Portland area hard to start 2024. Thousands of people lost power, and many are dealing with stressful, severe property damage. Tragically, at least a dozen people in our community died – losses that will stay with us forever.

The thaw is here, and the City of Portland wants to thank the thousands of intrepid workers and volunteers who braved difficult winter conditions to provide aid, make repairs and maintain crucial infrastructure. As our community recovers, the work continues.

For more than a week, Portland Bureau of Transportation crews worked around the clock to treat and clear thoroughfares so first responders and public transit could serve the community. Now crews are shifting to the recovery phase: monitoring road closures, assisting with debris cleanup after trees are removed from the roadway, and more.

If you are biking, watch for sand and gravel on snow routes - a necessity for keeping emergency routes navigable for first responders during winter weather. Gravel cleanup will commence after emergency operations conclude.

As snow and ice melt, Portlanders will start seeing potholes, which form when water freezes and expands under the pavement, compromising its strength. Once PBOT moves out of the recovery phase, crews will start filling them. Help the bureau get a head start by identifying and reporting potholes at 503-823-1700, pdxroads@portlandoregon.gov, or pdxreporter.org.

Every day, the Portland Water Bureau keeps water flowing from our water sources to your tap, maintaining reservoirs, pumps and 2,000+ miles of water pipes and monitoring water quality. From Jan. 13 to 20, their team repaired 20 main breaks and responded to more than 4,100 calls, dispatching staff to assist with hundreds of emergency water shutoffs.

Over 600 reports of downed trees and large branches in one week kept Portland Parks & Recreation's Urban Forestry crews busy. The team worked around the clock to clear major roads and ensure neighborhood access. In the coming weeks, their focus will shift to storm damage in and around Portland's parks.

Throughout the winter weather, Environmental Services responded to multiple emergencies, made repairs and minimized the impact of power outages and other disruptions on essential wastewater and storm water services. After a truck struck a power pole and knocked out power to the City's main wastewater treatment plant for several hours, crews operated backup systems and found solutions to keep core systems intact. They also made emergency repairs to a frozen intake pipe at the City's largest wastewater pump station, preventing sewage from overflowing into the Willamette River.

The customer service team at 311 fielded more than 700 calls on the busiest day of the storm, about triple their usual volume – sharing information about shelter locations and transportation, power outages, water and parking enforcement. The most popular topic was falling trees, which generated nearly 1,000 calls the week of Jan. 13-20.

Thousands of community members received vital information during the storm, thanks to a partnership among the Portland Bureau of Emergency Management, Community Organizations Active in Disasters (a national model) and community-based organizations who represent and serve multicultural and multilingual communities. Topics included carbon monoxide poisoning, avoiding frozen pipes, accessing state benefits during a power outage, winter weather shelter locations, calls for volunteers to staff shelters and more.

Property owners dealing with storm damage turned to the Bureau of Development Services for timely repair information. Road conditions during the



Water Bureau employee searches for the source of a broken water line (Photo courtesy of City of Portland)

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