

WASHINGTON STATE

Town is running out of places to put its record-breaking snowfall

BY DAVID GUTMAN • The Seattle Times

LEAVENWORTH, Wash. — Do you have any extra space? Would you like some snow? Leavenworth might be in touch.

The faux-Bavarian alpine town on the eastern slopes of the Cascades was still struggling to dig itself out Monday, after more than 4 feet of snow fell in less than 48 hours last week, clogging streets, shuttering businesses and causing fragile roofs to quake under the weight.

Business owners and employees shoveled. Neighbors offered snowblowers. The city has been plowing and hauling nearly 24 hours a day, for four days. The National Guard arrived Monday.

While the main streets are plowed, some smaller roads remain impassible. And when 4 feet falls all at once, it can't just be pushed aside. It needs somewhere to go.

There is too much snow in Leavenworth to simply plow the streets. It needs to be hauled away.

"It's just getting it out of our city," said Leavenworth Mayor Carl Florea, who declared a state of emergency Friday after the record-breaking snowfall. "We've been dumping it in every available open space, basically."

The city has a small fleet of plows, but they've had to hire contractors to haul the snow away.

"We're a winter town. We know that, so we've got plows that can move a normal amount of snow and get it off. But when you get this much, we do not have the equipment

to be able to remove snow," Florea said. "You worry about how to pay for it later. You just have to do it."

They've been dumping in an empty lot, behind one of the town's few traffic-lighted intersections, and they've used some land adjacent to the cemetery. They put as much as they could behind Safeway.

On Monday afternoon, the dump trucks were bound for the city boat ramp, on the banks of the Wenatchee River. The parking lot there looks like a big ice rink, ringed by 15-foot snow walls. The dump trucks unload near those walls. Another front loader pushes the freshly arrived mounds. The walls climb higher. The snow tumbles back down.

It is at once necessary and Sisyphean. It's keeping the dumping grounds accessible and organized. But the snow just keeps tumbling down.

Two blocks in the other direction from the school district headquarters, four National Guard members are wielding snow shovels. They scoop and hack and ax and throw, working their way through about 50 feet of what snow aficionados call Cascade concrete. They're trying to clear a path from the street to the front door of a home.

An elderly man contacted the city, asking for help. "Thank you gentlemen," he said, as he watched, smoking a cigarette.



Photos by Jennifer Buchanan/Seattle Times via TNS

Capt. Luis Torres wades through the snow after knocking on the door of a house Monday in Leavenworth, Washington. The National Guard was dispatched to the city to assist in the dig-out.



Tourists cross Front Street on Monday. Feet of snow buried Leavenworth after a winter storm roared through Washington, closing all four main mountain passes.

The National Guard is not really here to shovel. They're doing welfare checks. About two dozen soldiers are going door-to-door, to people who asked for help, but also just visiting homes that look like they could use a check-in.

They knock, ask if everyone is doing OK. Are people

warm, do they have enough food? They could be here up to a week.

"Their primary mission isn't to shovel driveways. It's to make sure people are safe," said Capt. Luis Torres, of the

Washington Army National Guard.

On Front Street, downtown Leavenworth's main drag, visitors are trickling back out. Pedestrians are shuffling warily along the slick pavement. Those trapped here over the weekend, after the storm closed all of Washington's mountain passes — the first time that's happened in recent memory — have cleared out.

Highway 2 through Stevens Pass remained closed Monday, with crews working toward a Wednesday reopening.

Sausages are grilling, kids are sledding, shops are opening.

Kevin Winters spent the last several days "just moving snow." He's a chiropractor, but he lives out on a pear orchard and he's got a plow blade on his Dodge Ram 2500. His county road a couple miles east of town hadn't been plowed, so he took it upon himself.

At some point, though, the pickup with the plow started to become less useful and he began relying on his tractor that's got a snowblower attachment.

"What a plow does, is it pushes," Winters said. "But a snowblower will toss it wherever you direct the shoot."

On Monday morning, he headed to the home of some friends to help clear them out. They're on vacation. He wryly noted the irony of their destination as he departed.

"Anyway, I've got to go to the Maui house and plow it out," he said.

Bonnie Kinnear made it the 2 miles from her home to her downtown gallery for the first time since Thursday. She'd spent the weekend digging out her own house. Her husband, who works for the Washington State Department of Transportation, has been helping to clear the still-shuttered Highway 2.

Now she cleared the sidewalk in front of her Metal Waterfall Gallery. Then she dug out the fire hydrant next door and cleared a path between it and the street. You never know.

"It's been an all-hands-on-deck situation," Kinnear said.

But she was encountering the same issues, on a much smaller scale, as the city, as the plows and the front-loaders.

"It's crazy," she said. "There's just nowhere to put the snow."

Brown again deploys state National Guard to hospitals

Associated Press

SALEM — Gov. Kate Brown is deploying Oregon National Guard members to help at hospitals that she says are under extreme pressure due to a COVID-19 omicron-fueled surge in hospitalizations.

A total of 1,200 Guard members will be deployed to more than 50 hospitals across the state, KATU-TV reported.

"Fueled by the Omicron variant, current hospitalizations are over 700 and daily COVID-19 case counts are alarmingly high," she said on Twitter, thanking Guard members, their families and their employers for this sacrifice and support.

"As they step up yet again,

I am asking all Oregonians to continue to do your part. Get vaccinated, get boosted, wear your masks, and stay home when you are sick," Brown said.

The Oregon Health Authority on Wednesday reported 47,272 new cases of COVID-19 from Jan. 3 through Jan. 9. That number is nearly six times higher than two weeks ago and three times higher than the August 2021 previous pandemic record for weekly cases, according to health officials.

There were also 486 new COVID-19-related hospitalizations last week, which is a 68% increase from the previous week, health officials said.

DEATH NOTICES

Frank Joseph Spiegel, Jr. of Bend
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Contributions may be made to: Central Oregon veteran Outreach or Partners In Care - Hospice

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