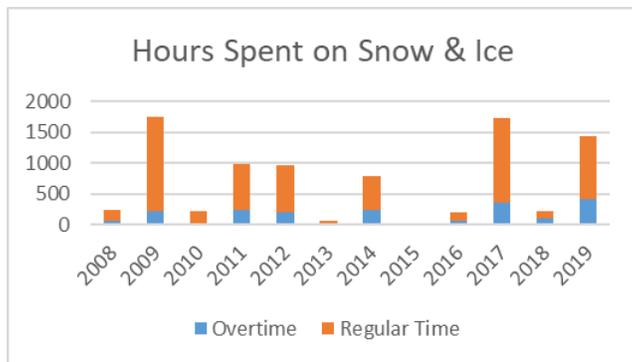


Facilities Management Special Winter Weather Edition!



Welcome to the 2019-2020 winter weather season! Even though over the last two weeks we have experienced near record dry weather, it's almost inevitable that ice and snow will come our way sometime in the next few months. One thing that is abundantly clear, is that there are no patterns that might indicate what we can expect. Some years we have little or no snow events while in others it seems we are constantly chasing the ice and snow.

Last year the team spent a total of 1,434 hours removing snow and ice from campus, including 410 hours of overtime. That's nearly double the average over the past 10 years!



As a winter storm approaches, Facilities Management spends a lot of time monitoring various weather forecasts as we try to put together a “best guess” about how the storm will affect the Western campus. We are aware of the fact that employees and students commute from a variety of locations in Whatcom and Skagit counties, but we also have to make sure the 4,000 or so students who live on campus have continued access to dining services and other key facilities.

Facilities Management crews reasonably expect to keep up with the conditions expected (i.e. snow, ice, freezing conditions)? Is there enough time to clear sidewalks and parking areas before everyone gets to campus? For commuters, weather conditions in Whatcom and Skagit counties may be worse or better than in Bellingham. Western stresses that individuals must make their own decisions on whether to travel to Western during bad weather based on a specific assessment of their own safety and circumstances.

Above all, SAFETY is the top priority. Is the campus reasonably safe for students and staff to navigate? Can the

In the “for what it’s worth category”: Forecasting for the Bellingham area seems to be pretty much an art of interpolating based on what’s happening in Seattle and Vancouver. The Farmers Almanac thinks southern BC will be colder than normal with above-normal precipitation and below normal snowfall. It also predicts the pacific northwest will be warmer and rainier than normal with below normal snowfall. NOAA’s prediction is similar: higher than normal temperatures and equal chance of normal, above, or below normal precipitation. Both these sources were misleading last year as they predicted warmer temperatures and low snowfall – yet we had a couple of impactful snow events

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SNOW REMOVAL FAST FACTS

- The snow removal team consists of the 18 person Outdoor Maintenance Shop plus a volunteer team of custodians, plus anyone designated as essential personnel.
- Roughly 4 miles of streets and roads, 59 acres of parking lots, and 5.5 miles of sidewalks require snow removal and traction treatment....not to mention the dozens of stairs and building entrances which must be shoveled.

WHAT HAPPENS?

Day before:

- If the prognosis is for freezing temperatures and icy conditions, the Grounds Maintenance staff will pre-treat key areas with ice melt to mitigate the expected iciness.
- If the forecast is nearly certain for snow during the night, we will direct certain staff to come in early the next day to start snow removal.
- During the night, the University Police Department monitors conditions and asks for call-outs if needed.

Day of a storm:

- The Outdoor Maintenance Supervisor and Facilities Management Director arrive on campus between 3 and 5 AM.
- Based on current ice and snow conditions as well as the weather forecasts, the FM Director recommends to the Vice President of Business and Financial Affairs (VPBFA) a course of action – whether to remain open, to be closed, or to have a delayed opening. The VPBFA makes a recommendation to the President, who then makes a final decision. Our goal is to have a status message out by 6 AM.
- Throughout the day, conditions are monitored in case there is a need to change the status of the university. Campus members who encounter what they consider unsafe conditions are encouraged to report the location and description to Facilities Management Work Control at extension 3420.

Other considerations:

Even if campus is open during snowy weather, campus conditions are not likely to be what everyone would consider “normal”. The Outdoor Maintenance crew

will focus on accessible routes between residence halls and dining halls, accessible routes to and from academic buildings, and access to handicapped entrances. That means that individual short-cuts and secondary pathways may not be cleared unless or until the work load permits.

WHAT ELSE SHOULD YOU KNOW?

Leading up to the winter season Facilities Management stays in touch with the Disability Access Center to know where our ADA efforts may need to be focused. We also make contact with organizers of special events to determine what actions may be needed to keep those events running. For example, a scheduled basketball game at Carver Gym may mean our snow removal crews come in on a weekend. On the other hand, if no major activities are scheduled, our efforts may be minimized during non-core hours.

For information on Western’s weather policies, transportation information, decision-making process and more, visit our weather information page online.

<http://emergency.wvu.edu/inclement.html>



A REFLECTION

If you recall the big snow event in February last year, campus closed for a couple of days due to the amount of snow and ice on campus as well as in the local commuting area. During the unprecedented closure, there were numerous people who braved the elements and drove to campus for any variety of reasons. In many cases, those intrepid souls actually got in the way of snow removal efforts, making it even more challenging to bring campus back to normal operations.

The moral of the story: If you absolutely have to come to campus, please don’t create more work by parking where plows have to go around your vehicle.