

Mercury Drops To Near Zero; Schools Close

1-24-1959

Blizzard Blocks More County Roads; Strong Northeaster Blows

Supt. C. Paine Shangle announced late Tuesday that all Bellingham schools will be closed Wednesday.

Caught in the grip of another miserable combination of strong north winds, subfreezing temperatures and drifting snow, Whatcom county seemed destined to undergo an extended weather ordeal the rest of the week.

A five-day forecast issued by the U. S. weather bureau in Seattle said "below normal" temperatures throughout Washington and Oregon would continue through Saturday.

The Bellingham area, catching the sudden blizzard's full force, looked for another night of near-zero temperatures, at least, as the mercury got up to only 8 degrees at 2 o'clock Tuesday afternoon.

Schools were closed Tuesday and would not open until some improvement occurs. No formal closing announcement was made beyond Tuesday, however.

State highways were reported open as of 2 p. m. but snow was continuing to drift, and other roads were blocked by snow piles. Power was off at Sumas and part of Everson, but telephone crews, guessing at the approximate location of a break which cut circuits to Sumas and Everson, fought their way through to make repairs which restored communication at 1:50 p. m.

Temperatures in rural areas were zero or below. One Pole road housewife, Mrs. H. B. Benedict, noted a reading of 6 degrees below zero. It was zero on the Guide Meridian and at Mount Baker lodge and Shuksan.

Bellingham airport weather observers listed 4.2 degrees as the of-

(Please Turn to Page 3, Column 2)

Mercury Drops to Near Zero; Schools Close

(From Page One)

ficial low for the day. That came about 7 a. m., after which the mercury began a slow rise. It was 7 degrees above at 10:30, but terrific northeast winds reached gale force—62 miles an hour—in gusts.

Strong northeasterly winds blew steadily during the morning. The sky was clear and the sun came out, but that was small consolation as long as the northeaster kept sweeping down from Canada across the Sumas Prairie and into Bellingham.

CREWS BOG DOWN

Utilities men were battling to restore power and communications to Sumas, Everson and adjacent rural areas, but some line crews couldn't get through the Guide Meridian to Lynden. Snow plows also bogged down on the Guide, and men were awaiting evacuation.

Puget Sound Power & Light crews were standing by in Lynden, hoping to push eastward to repair line

damage which shut off electrical supply to Sumas and part of Everson. However only two of three trucks dispatched to Lynden could make it that far, and the outlook was grim.

Reports of farm families' efforts to compensate for crippled facilities were heard. Frozen pumps, dwindling food and other troubles were common, as farmers attempted to provide for stock as well as farm products and themselves.

Early Tuesday the highway picture had looked fairly good, as crews worked throughout Monday afternoon and night removing snow drifts. Traction was fair on main state roads and busses were negotiating the major routes.

District Supervisor Everett Baxter had hoped to clear off all state roads by midmorning, but winds failed to diminish and work of plows being nullified in many areas.

The state patrol could offer little help Tuesday and advised everyone to stay off roads unless imperative to travel. A half dozen accidents in the space of 90 minutes at Custer Monday evening complicated state patrol work.

Fourteen inches of snow at Custer was reported, with eight at Blaine and six at Burlington and Glacier. Bellingham had varying depths, with six or seven inches in most places.

Only Western Washington college and business schools in Bellingham held classes Tuesday, all city and county school districts closing their buildings.

The Bellingham school plant was in good shape, Business Manager A. E. Bowsher said, thanks to janitors reporting at 3 a. m. to operate heating plants, preventing freezeups. State highways were cleared of

the worst drifts from Monday's heavy snowfall that night and Tuesday morning. District Supervisor Everett Baxter said traction was fairly good on dry snow on most stretches of state highway.

County roads were another matter, however, Commissioner E. R. Haxton pointing out that his Third (northwest) district was more isolated than previously since snow was deeper.

Wind piled the heavy snow up in drifts on roads throughout the county and Haxton pointed out that the 950 miles of roads in the Third and Second (northeast) districts could not be cleared simultaneously.

The First (southeast) commissioner district was in "pretty good shape" after snowplows worked throughout the night. A hillier area, snow wasn't piling up so badly there.

The sudden freeze postponed a crisis at the Nooksack bridges at Marietta, where ice jamming up had turned swollen waters into unused river channels. Bridges were closed to traffic Monday, but were open Tuesday when cold weather stopped the melting of snow, thus preventing abnormal runoff into the river.

However, County Engineer Ralph Knutzen pointed out that traffic to Marietta was cut off anyway, due to big drifts near the cement plant and near the Hoff road this side of the village.

Knutzen said there were no road restrictions except those imposed by nature. Local situations dictated whether traffic operated on specific roads. Most roads had blocks at some point, however, with the deep snow being piled up by strong winds.

The state's rotary plow bit into drifts in the Sumas and Lynden vicinities Monday night. Delay in phone calls obscured the exact situation on the Sumas prairie, but there was no doubt that it was cold, stormy and generally miserable. North Coast Greyhound was main-

taining its U. S. 99 runs, both north and south, with trips originating here leaving on the usual times. Pacific Stage Lines was getting through from Vancouver almost on time, though Greyhound busses from Seattle were late.

A stage trip to Lynden was planned by that company for noon and the Deming stage also was operating. However, runs to Sumas and Ferndale, as well as Gooseberry Point, were called off due to impassable roads.

West Coast Airlines eyed 58-mile gusts at 9:50 a. m. and called off its morning and afternoon flights. United Air Lines followed suit.

TRAINS LATE

Great Northern passenger trains were delayed by slides southward. General Agent R. C. Ramsey said the trains from Seattle were three to four hours behind schedule as of noon Tuesday.

Later the G. N. suspended service to Blaine and Vancouver as another slide was reported in that direction.

The Milwaukee sent a train northward shortly before noon, later than the normal starting time, and hoped to get into Lynden and Sumas.

Northern Pacific Agent W. C. Wilson said that nearly normal operations were in effect, though the road was watching conditions closely. The N. P. runs to Sumas northward and Sedro Woolley southward, via Lake Whatcom's eastern shore.

NORTHWEST WEATHER

(By the Associated Press)

Winter took another sharp bite at the Pacific Northwest today.

Snow, cold and bitter winds prevailed over wide areas. Colder nights were in the offing.

The U.S. weather bureau issued a special cold wave warning for southeastern Washington, northeastern Oregon and central Idaho. It said temperatures would fall to from zero to 10 below in that region by Wednesday morning. The forecast for that area also carried a prediction of occasional light snow, with gradually clearing skies this afternoon and tonight.

Lower temperatures were forecast for all northwest areas.

Some of the extreme northern parts of the state already were suffering from weather nearly as bad as the Friday the 13th blizzard.

The north end of the Olympic peninsula had its worst blasts yesterday. A 39-mile wind with gusts up to nearly 50, reminded Port Angeles residents of the recent blizzard. The blow left four to five inches of snow in Port Angeles, eight at Lake Crescent and lesser depths in other peninsula areas.

Snow depths varied widely. Six inches and more were reported in the Everett and Bellingham vicinities and up to eight in parts of Cowlitz county. But in the county's main cities of Kelso and Longview, there was only about an inch of the white stuff.

Bitter winds whipped the Seattle-Tacoma sector, but there was only slight snow on the ground and the sun was shining today.

The forecast was for a low of 5 to 10 degrees tonight in Seattle.

While schools reopened in the Port Angeles area for the first time since the January 13 blizzard, some rural schools in Western Washington closed again today. Highways were too icy for safe driving of school busses. Some Bellingham-bound motorists left their cars at Everett last night.