

# Fighting cold leaves memories

Thursday, January 24, 1985 O&E

(F)15A

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They were just as busy with recalcitrant gas furnaces at Century Trace Inc. on the Farmington side of Eight Mile Road.

"It's not unusual to have some of our service people working 24 to 36 hours straight," said Henry Wolf, Century Trace's installation and service manager, who was dressed for the weather with layers of sweatshirts.

Trace's "day rates" on service calls are \$29.95 for the first 20 minutes of checking," Wolf said. Rates are higher nights and weekends, he added.

"Most people take various items in the home — the roof, furnace, water heater, faucets — for granted," Wolf said. "They think nothing of paying ten or twelve thousand dollars for a new car every three years, but they expect a furnace to last forever."

"The unit, as everyone recommends, should be checked once a year. The average unit in our metro area is running at 45 or 50 percent efficiency. That means that maybe 50 cents of each dollar spent on heat is going up the chimney."

VERY COLD weather sometimes freezes water lines in a building, and frozen water lines often burst.

Morris Schwartz of Farmington Hills Plumbing Supply on Orchard Lake Road handled "quite a few" calls on frozen water lines last Monday.

"Generally, it's either lines that have been put on an outside wall, or a draft coming in underneath the roof," Schwartz said. If pipes inside a wall freeze and burst, "unfortunately, you've got to cut out the wall," he added.

HEATING PLANTS functioned and the pipes didn't freeze in buildings belonging to the Farmington Public Schools. But the district still joined about 340 others in Michigan and canceled classes for Monday.

"We agonized about it," said Superintendent Lewis Schulman, who showed up for work even if his schools were closed. "The real reason, I guess, is

that we transport better than 8,000 students every day.

That means kids are waiting for buses. That means kids are walking.

"When we made the decision on Sunday night, I was told that the temperature was 14 or 15 below and that the wind chill factor was minus 60 degrees."

School was back in session on Tuesday, Schulman said.

School was never out at Oakland Community College, a commuter school which includes the Orchard Ridge Campus in Farmington Hills.

"We're working with a different clientele," said James Stevenson, provost at the Orchard Ridge campus. "We don't have school buses which have to be started. We don't have students who have to walk to school and face possible frostbite."

"But we're constantly monitoring the situation. We have to determine whether buildings are adequately heated, whether the parking lots are plowed and ready. Obviously, we have to be concerned about the condition of the roads so that our students can get here."

PASSABLE ROADS are the job of the departments of public service in Farmington and Farmington Hills.

When extreme cold follows heavy snow, salt, traditionally used to de-ice streets, isn't very effective, according to Tom Blaisell, Farmington Hills' director of public services.

"Salt starts losing its effectiveness below 15 degrees — it just sits on the road and gets blown off with the cars," he said.

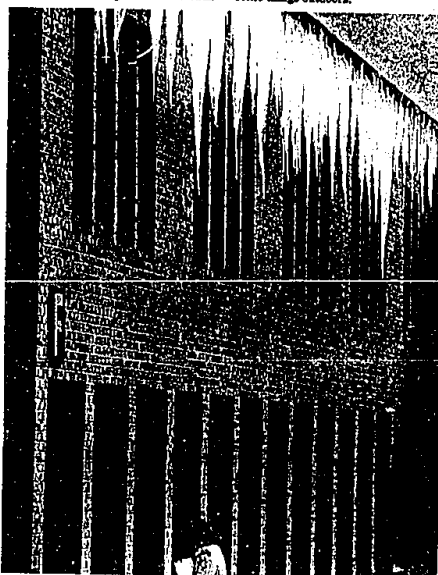
During cold spells, a sand and chloride mixture, normally used on gravel roads, is employed throughout the city. "Rather than melt the snow, it impregnates it and provides a gritty substance to drive on," Blaisell said.

The city's snow-removal equipment was still in heavy use on Monday. "We were getting drifting in all our subdivisions, especially on our north-south streets," Blaisell said.

Equipment used around the clock breaks down. That's been a problem in Farmington Hills, Blaisell said.

"The operators may change, but the equipment keeps on running," he added. "When we're on 24-hour operations, we do the same thing with our mechanics."

At any given time, we have two mechanics out there. "Because of the cold, we have starting problems. On some equipment, especially diesel, if you let it sit outside for awhile, it's hard to start. And our garage is such that we have to store some things outdoors."



Icicles hang from Building F on the Orchard Ridge Campus of Oakland Community College. Cold and snow closed most public schools Monday, but OCC was open.

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