

Blizzard meets its match in Farmington DPW crews

The first full-fledged snow storm of the winter elicited only a few flurries of excitement as Farmington area residents opted to stay indoors.

Spokesmen for the police, the Farmington Hills Ambulance Co., fire departments and Botsford Hospital reported that life went on almost as usual during the snow storm.

One of the few signs of disruption was the added holiday that Farmington students received when the district closed schools, Monday after the area was hit with six inches of snow.

Most of the area's service departments credited the department of public works (DPW) of both cities with encouraging the ho-hum attitude toward the storm by quickly cleaning the roads.

Farmington DPW Director David Jones said that the fast work was caused by his department's policy of following a snow storm instead of waiting for the aftermath.

"The subdivisions were cleared out on Monday, by 8 p.m. We had everything cleaned out by Tuesday at 4 p.m.," Jones said.

"We started at 9:30 a.m., Monday. We start our operation when the storm begins. We're always the first city cleaned out," he said.

TO BE THE FIRST snow free city, Farmington's DPW employees used four graders, two tractors and four snow plows.

They spread about 100 tons of salt on Farmington roads since Saturday. The salt cost the department \$10.20 a ton.

Through the storm, two men worked overtime on Monday night and two worked throughout Sunday night.

Another reason the city had the snow in control was the notice of the impending storm the DPW received from its weather service on Saturday.

"They told us we'd have six inches of snow," Jones said.

Jones's counterpart in Farmington Hills, Bob Shaw, met with an equal amount of success in his department's fight against the storm.

"Basically, we used the plows to clean the snow," he explained.

"We started Monday at 3 a.m. and finished about midnight. We took a break and started again on Tuesday at 5 a.m. We were finished by 1 p.m.," he said.

Shaw's crews were responsible for cleaning about 230 miles of road.

To clean the roads, Farmington Hills maintenance crews used eight trucks, two road graders and two rubber-tired loaders with buckets for the snow attached to the front.

"WE USED about 300 pounds of salt per mile," Shaw estimated.

Farmington Hills DPW crews cleared away the snow to the pavement on the major highways, such as the mile roads and on the expressway service drives, according to Shaw. Shaw's department received some complaints about the condition of portions of Grand River.

"That road is taken care of by the county," he said. "I told the people to call the county. Part of Grand River is taken care of by Wayne County."

Some of the other roads are under Oakland County jurisdiction. I won't do them. My department doesn't get reimbursed for clearing those roads."

Other department heads were thankful that the DPW promptly cleared the roads.

"I was worried before the snow plows went out," admitted Farmington Hills Fire Chief John Van De Voort. "But the DPW did an excellent job. The main streets were cleared in no time."

THE FARMINGTON HILLS Fire Department placed one man on stand-by duty in each of its four stations Sunday night.

These men were off duty by Monday evening.

"I don't know if it was worse than usual," said Van De Voort in retrospect.

Adding to the DPW's praises was Lt. John Santamauro of the Farmington Police Department.

"There weren't as many accidents, as may be expected. The majority of people stayed home," he said.

"There weren't as many stranded motorists. The streets were plowed quickly," he said.

"There wasn't that much out of the ordinary."

One of the few out-of-the-ordinary occurrences was the closing of the Farmington schools.

A relieved Lewis Schulman, superintendent of the schools, confessed that he was glad the district closed.

"It was awful," he said. "I'm glad we closed."

Although the students were expected to have problems getting to school, the bus drivers had their vehicles ready to roll when the closing order was issued.

"It would have been impossible to conduct school," Schulman said.

MANY FARMINGTON residents decided to stay home with their children. The result was that a few bored adults tried to test the DPW on a clean-up job by vigorously shoveling the sidewalks.

For a few, the added exercise

could have meant tragedy but the Farmington Hills Ambulance Co. and Botsford Hospital reported only a slight increase in number of heart attacks and chest pains.

"We didn't have a rise in coronaries," reported John Wicks, director of nursing at Botsford Hospital, Farmington Hills. "The general impression that I got was that we didn't have a marked increase in cases in our emergency room."

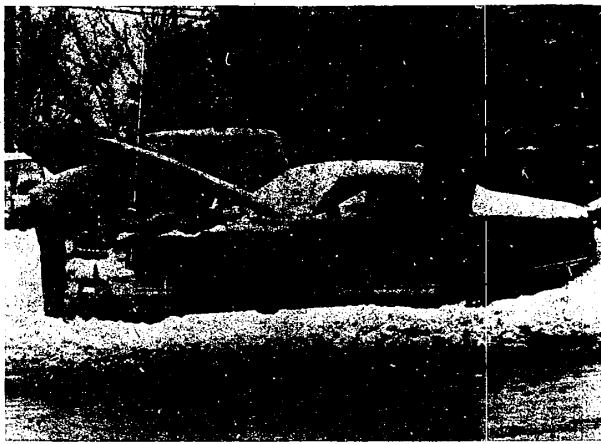
The home-bound adults also kept the accident rate down.

"People in that kind of weather aren't driving that fast. Major accidents happen in good weather," Wicks said.

Kathy Slobin, a dispatcher for the Farmington Hills Ambulance Co., concurred with Wicks.

"We had only a few minor accidents in Redford Township," she said. "People drive slower in this kind of weather."

"We had about a 15 per cent rise in our coronary cases," ambulance company owner Barney Slobin said. "It wasn't that much of an increase."



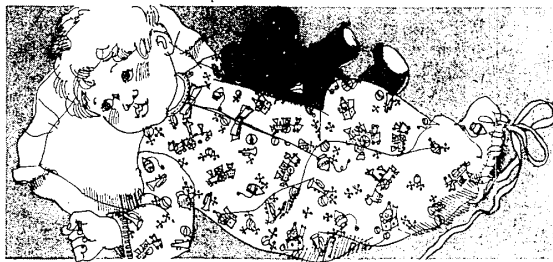
Puzzling over the workings of a stalled car became the number-one pastime in the Farmington area when motorists and machinery were called upon to cope with six inches of snow and sub-zero temperatures.



Like Druids celebrating a mysterious rite, these burlap covered bushes hover together against the cold in a Farmington backyard.

Photos by
Cynthia Abatt

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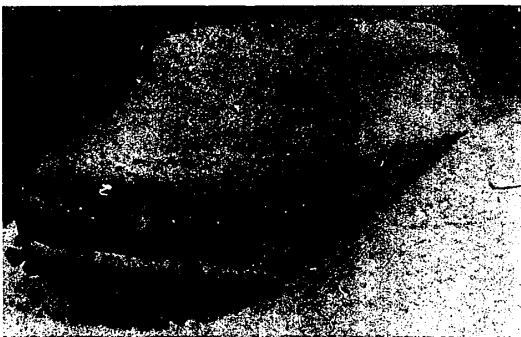


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Motorists stayed indoors rather than fight the weather and the traffic. Slick roads and cold weather helped to keep the number of accidents down.



The weather was just ducky for these denizens of a pond behind the Jamestown Apartments in Farmington Hills. Oblivious to the five degree weather, the ducks serenely, if somewhat stiffly, swam around their home waters.



Some gave up and decided the battle against the snow was best fought from indoors. This car in Farmington Hills stays moored in the snow while its owner enjoys the comfort and warmth of his home.