

Storm Dumps Record Snowfall

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done everything they can possibly do."

Crediting cooperative customers who responded to pleas to cut back on energy use and the nature of the storm, a BEMC spokesman said the utility was grateful there were no extended outages.

"It got crucial there for a while," said Gore. "It was bad. We had to use our load management to keep our peak down as much as we could." BEMC has a voluntary load management program in which participating customers allow the utility to turn off or turn down their hot water heaters in winter months for brief periods of time to reduce the amount of power consumed system-wide at any given time.

Gore said the biggest power outage in the west end of the county occurred in Brierwood Estates as a result of overloading. He noted that there were also some recurring problems in the Long Beach area.

Given the serious nature of the storm, Gore said things could have been much worse. "We were fortunate. The snow was powdery, not the packing kind, so it was no problem for trees and power lines."

While the storm didn't cause any major power outages in the county, it did cause several motorists who risked traveling to slide off the roadway and forced others to abandon their vehicles short of their destinations.

Owners of local tow truck companies contacted said they received a lot of calls, but most were not equipped with snow tires or four-wheel drive and had no way to get traction in the heavy snow. Most were waiting for some of the snow to melt before trying to retrieve cars that had run off the road.

Ronnie Babson of Ash, owner of Babson's Auto Sales and Salvage,

said he had "right many calls" as a result of the storm. He said Tuesday there were "still a lot of people with cars on the side of the road and in the ditch waiting for the snow to melt so we can get them out."

The poor travel conditions didn't keep emergency units off the roads.

"It was terrible," said Calabash EMS Chief Kathy Morfit. "We must have had 10 calls in 36 hours." Operating with the three people who lived closest to the building, the squad responded to calls ranging from a broken wrist to a heart attack.

In addition to daytime calls, the ambulance ran through the snow for about four hours Saturday night when the storm was at its worst and was on the road again six hours Sunday night.

"I was up all Christmas Eve and didn't see Santa Claus," said Mrs. Morfit.

Snow and ice weren't the only problems over the holiday weekend as record low temperatures caused water lines and water pumps across the county to freeze or break.

Richard Lyons of Lyons Plumbing of Calabash said he made about 10 calls over the holiday weekend responding to area residents with frozen or broken water pipes and frozen water pumps. He worked until 10:30 p.m. Christmas Eve and was out working again Christmas Day.

"Saturday was horrendous all day long," said Lyons. "I got stuck in a snow drift at Sunset Beach. It was pretty bad."

While some area residents were without water service, others across the county were out of fuel or were running low and feared the worst with the recent cold temperatures. Fuel suppliers, however, said Tuesday they've had the same problem as everyone else trying to get

around the county on snow-covered roads. Though calls were plentiful, Shallotte Ice & Fuel Co. kept its trucks parked Tuesday because of secondary road conditions, but expected to roll them again Wednesday, Mrs. T.D. Lindsey said.

Acme Oil Co. in Thomasboro and R.D. White & Sons in Shallotte were responding to as many calls as possible, said their respective spokespersons, Marie Long and Kyle White.

"Lots of calls? That doesn't even begin to describe it. It's been a mess," said Marie Long of Acme Oil. While trying to get to all customers as quickly as possible, she said it was impossible to know who needed fuel the most. "When the weather changes this drastically, fuel consumption goes up dramatically," she said, making delivery records of little use.

Shallotte Town Clerk Mary Etta Hewett also said the storm didn't cause any "major catastrophes" in town. She said there apparently were a few water line breaks. With DOT crews taking care of U.S. 17, she said town employees were trying to clear snow and ice from side streets Tuesday.

Shirley Carroll, director of the Brunswick County Volunteer and Information Center, said staff and volunteers distributed food baskets last Wednesday and Thursday and delivered cooked meals to the homebound Friday before the storm hit. She said the food should have lasted several days and that she hadn't been notified of any problems. "I think I would have gotten a call at home if there had been an emergency need."

Since the staff worked through a vacation day last Friday, Mrs. Carroll said the VIC office would be closed this Friday as well as New Year's Day.



HUGE ICICLES hang from the roof of the Shallotte Senior Center. STAFF PHOTO BY DOUG RUTTER



HOLDEN BEACH UTILITIES SUPERVISOR Henry Thompson plows more than a foot of snow off Ocean Boulevard Sunday afternoon. STAFF PHOTO BY DOUG RUTTER

Weekend Blizzard Is Called County's 'Benchmark Storm'

This past weekend's 17-inch snowfall "could very well be the all-time record snowfall for one storm" in the Shallotte area, said Shallotte Point meteorologist Jackson Canady.

"We had ourselves a perfect scenario for a perfect snowstorm," Canady said. "This was a benchmark storm to mark all other winter storms by."

Besides bringing Brunswick County its first white Christmas in more than 100 years, the snowfall Friday night through Sunday topped a previous record of 11 inches set in March 1980, Canady said. Other significant snowfalls in recent years were eight inches in February 1973 and five inches in January 1988.

The winter storm was accompanied by unseasonably frigid temper-

atures. For the period of Dec. 19 through 25, the average daily temperature in the Shallotte area was 28 degrees, which Canady said was 20 degrees below normal.

The average daily low temperature was 20 degrees, while the average daily high temperature was 36 degrees. The minimum low temperature for the period was two degrees on Dec. 25; the maximum high temperature was 52 degrees on Dec. 21.

With winds gusting up to 30 mph during the storm, snow drifted more than three feet in some areas, and the local wind-chill factor ranged from zero to 10 degrees below zero, Canady said.

Liquid precipitation totaled 2.5 inches, with 1.7 inches of that amount coming from the weekend

snowstorm.

Canady's local weather outlook calls for temperatures to moderate through the weekend, averaging from the low 30s at night to the low 50s during the day. Precipitation also should be near normal, with about one-half inch of rain.

Although no winter storms are forecast for the "near future," Canady noted that harsh winters run in cycles and that a trend is developing toward a colder than normal season. However, "it would be difficult to say the rest of the winter is going to be like this," he commented, "because (the weekend storm) would be hard to top."

Developer Organizes Citizens Group To Protest Septic Tank Fees

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Until the health board recommendations were approved with adoption of the county budget in late June, the \$20 site evaluation fees were refunded on lots that were determined to be unsuitable for septic tanks. Rhodes has said that state studies indicate that an individual site evaluation costs the department approximately \$100, considering the related time spent by sanitarians, secretaries and administrators.

Benton also wrote: "We would also request that the Health Board make available to the Tax Department information showing these lots unsuitable for human habitation. We realize that the Health Board has found a word that makes our lots suitable—"provisionally suitable"—but yet the public does not know what to do with these slips and most of the time, when they find out what to do with them, the cost is so high it makes these lots absolutely unsuitable."

He added that the group feels that the county should allow a 90-percent reduction in tax value on provisionally suitable lots, as the tax department does with lots that are determined to be unsuitable.

Patsy Elliott, head of the tax de-

partment's land appraisal division, said Friday that her office does consider allowing the 90-percent reduction on provisionally suitable lots, if property owners can show that recommended improvements would not be feasible.

She also noted that it is the property owner's responsibility to contact the tax department about any reduction that may be sought. If the reduction is approved, it is applied to the next annual tax billing, she said.

Benton told the *Beacon* that he views new sewage disposal rules that go into effect Jan. 1 to be "more restrictive," due to new space considerations on lots where fill material is used to build up the lots.

Crowder estimated that septic tanks on those lots probably will require twice as much space under the new rules, since fill will have to be sloped more gradually on a 1:4 rise-to-run ratio. Also, more expensive low-pressure septic systems are re-

quired on lots where fill material is used.

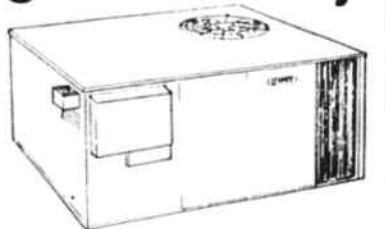
Still, both Crowder and county Soil Scientist Walter Marley speculated that the new regulations will allow septic systems on many once undevelopable lots—especially canal lots on the county's barrier islands—since the use of fill will be allowed.

"I would estimate that well over 50 percent of the canal lots will be permissible," Marley said, "but only for (low-pressure) systems and provided enough space is available."

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