With the winter weather season upon us, it’s a good time to remind everyone of what happens before, during, and after snow and ice events, and what to expect during those times.

As weather systems approach, Facilities Management spends a lot of time monitoring various weather forecasts as we try to put together a “best guess” about how the system or 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.

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

**SNOW REMOVAL FAST FACTS**

- The snow removal team consists of the 18 person Outdoor Maintenance Shop.
- Roughly 4 miles of streets and roads require snow removal and traction treatment as well as 5.5 miles of sidewalks….not to mention the dozens of stairs and building entrances which must be shoveled.
- The 59 acres of parking lots are handled by the one-person parking services utility worker, supplemented by the Outdoor Maintenance crew as competing campus needs allow.
- Bellingham averages just under 12” of snow per year.
  - We average about 2 major snow events per year.
  - The average campus snow event is less than 2”.
WHAT HAPPENS?

Day before a potential weather event:
- 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. Disclaimer: pre-treatment is only effective if there is no rain to wash it away!
- If the forecast is nearly certain for snow or icy conditions during the night, we will direct certain staff to come in early the next day to start snow removal or ice mitigation.
- During the night, the University Police Department monitors conditions and initiates ice or snow removal call-outs if needed.

Day of an event:
- When called out, or based on the previous day’s planning, the Outdoor Maintenance Supervisor and Facilities Management Director will arrive on campus between 4 and 5 AM to assess the need.
- Based on current ice and snow conditions as well as the weather forecasts, the Outdoor Maintenance Supervisor directs available staff and/or recalls additional staff.
- 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 routes between residence halls and dining halls, 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.