

LOCALNEWS



STAFF PHOTO BY SPENSER BICKETT

An International Falls man uses a snowblower to remove snow from his residence Tuesday morning. Meteorologists at the National Weather Service in Duluth said temperatures will turn bitterly cold later in the week and are urging people to remove snow quickly to avoid unnecessary exposure to the cold.

First comes snow, then comes cold

Meteorologists urge residents to clean up the foot of snow expected to fall before temps drop well-below zero

BY EMILY GEDDE
Staff Writer

Steady snow fell overnight Monday in Borderland and began to taper off Tuesday morning, but meteorologists say there is more where that came from.

As of Tuesday morning, about 5.8 inches of snow covered the ground with another 5-10 inches expected to fall by Thursday morning.

"Tuesday night will be considered the money time," Carol Christenson, meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Duluth told The Journal Tuesday morning. "That is when we'll see the most snow."

The blame for the snowstorm can be cast at a strong, low-pressure system making its way across the northern plains. Christenson said having low pressure storm systems similar to the one the area is experiencing is common for this time of year, however, because the system is so strong and "very deep," it is moving at a slower pace and bringing more snow.

"The snow is very dense and hard to shovel," she said. "It isn't the fluffy, easy-to-move stuff."

Safe winter driving tips

When traveling during winter months, the Minnesota State Patrol reminds motorists to:

- Always use seat belts.
- Give yourself plenty of travel time — don't put your schedule before safety.
- Clear snow and ice from all vehicle windows, hood, headlights, brake lights and directional signals.
- Adjust speed to road and weather conditions.
- Lower speeds help drivers avoid crashes and minimize those that occur.
- Keep a safe stopping distance between vehicles, and leave extra room between your vehicle and snow plows or other removal equipment.
- Headlights must be turned on when it is snowing or sleeting.

Still, the meteorologist urged people against letting the snow sit for too long because it'll be followed by a blast of arctic air that may leave daytime highs barely above zero by the weekend.

"We'll be seeing very cold temperatures later on this week," she said. "It'll be drawing extremely cold air south into our region making snow removal a challenge. People need to get out there and get this cleaned up as soon as possible."

Christenson joked she could run out of adjectives to describe the cold that is on its way.

"It's going to get really,

really cold," she said.

Temperatures are expected to start in the teens on Thursday morning before tumbling. Overnight lows could fall well below zero Thursday night with little warmup expected when the sun comes up Friday and into the rest of the weekend.

"There won't be much of a warmup at all," she said of daytime temps later in the week. "Temperatures will be below zero Thursday night...and even colder Friday night. And then Saturday will be well below zero. Basically, we're looking at temps getting increasingly colder."

Firefighters receive training funding

BY SPENSER BICKETT
Staff Writer

Minnesota's firefighters will again receive funding to keep their skills sharp.

The Minnesota Board of Firefighter Training and Education recently announced it will provide Minnesota's 784 fire departments more than \$1.6 million — \$80 per firefighter — for training classes.

"These grants benefit the safety of all Minnesotans," Bruce West, MBFTE executive director, said in a release. "Assuring annual firefighter training is good for departments and their communities. Skill updating makes firefighters better responders and also keeps them safer."

International Falls Fire Department Chief Jerry Jensen said the training dollars helps bring in instructors to teach specialty techniques they can't afford in the department's budget.

In addition to increasing department training budgets by \$80 per firefighter, the MBFTE will provide more than \$1.4 million for live burn, hazardous materials operations and other training courses.

This is the fourth year the MBFTE has provided firefighter training funding. The allotment process helps



Jerry Jensen

eliminate the training budget disparity between larger, better-funded departments and those in cities and towns with smaller budgets.

In the past, the Falls Fire Department has used the funding to get extra training on confined space entry, hazardous material awareness, and high-level low-angle rescuing, Jensen said.

"It's above and beyond the normal funding for training we get from the state," Jensen said. "It makes a big difference."

The amount of training money departments receive depends on funding allocated to the MBFTE by Minnesota's Fire Safety Account. The Fire Safety Account was created in 2006 by the Minnesota Legislature and is funded by a fire-safety surcharge on all homeowner and certain commercial insurance policies. The Fire Safety Advisory Committee makes recommendations to the Minnesota Department of Public Safety commissioner on funding usage.

The funding allows the Falls Fire Department to prepare for things it doesn't

want to see happen, but be ready for nonetheless, Jensen said. Places like the Iron Range and the metro area have different organizations providing mutual aid, he said, which is difficult in International Falls.

"We work with the Fort Frances Fire Department, and they're well-trained, too," Jensen said. "We back each other up."

West said firefighters of all experience levels need annual training to help keep themselves and their communities safe. Live burn training is an especially effective tool, he said.

"It doesn't matter if you're one year in the department or 30 years, you still learn every day," West said. "There are things that happen inside a live burn that will better prepare you for the next fire."

The Minnesota Department of Public Safety comprises 11 divisions where 2,100 employees operate programs in the areas of law enforcement, crime victim assistance, traffic safety, alcohol and gambling, emergency communications, fire safety, pipeline safety, driver licensing, vehicle registration and emergency management. DPS activity is anchored by three core principles: education, enforcement and prevention.

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