

Facilities staff endures freezing temperatures to clear campus

TRISTAN BENNETT

NEWS EDITOR

Arkansas State University's Facilities Management team became campus heroes following last week's nearly unprecedented winter weather.

David Handwork, assistant vice chancellor for Facilities Management, said his team began preparing for the storms before the first round of ice.

"We tried to anticipate as much as we could on what could happen," Handwork said. "We're very fortunate that our director of landscape services used to work for a company that did a lot of snow removal. He helped us really kind of plan out what we could expect for and really lined up our teams, his teams and even with contracted labor with how to approach it."

The university assembled the Emergency Operations Center, which included Facilities Management staff, to make a decision about on-campus classes. Dr. Bill Smith, A-State chief communications officer, said while they have guidelines, each situation is different.

"Winter weather is a very different challenge in our state," Smith said. "We had a very significant amount of snowfall, but not out of the ordinary, honestly. What was a little unusual this time is that there were back-to-back snow events of almost the same magnitude, so it was a longer duration snow event that was joyfully



Photo by: Tristan Bennett | News Editor

Facilities Management staff began working to clear residential parking lots as soon as the snow stopped falling. They used equipment like skid-steer Bobcats to help with the removal.

preceded by an ice event."

The EOC made the decision to move classes online until Facilities Management could clear campus and roads around town were drivable.

Facilities Management worked with housing to ensure employees would be able to get to work to begin clearing the snow as soon as possible. Almost all of the landscape team stayed on campus for the duration of the storm.

Even with all their

preparations, as snow began falling at peak rates on Monday, Facilities Management teams had to take a step back and re-evaluate their plan.

They began clearing snow on Tuesday even though more would come on Wednesday.

"If we waited until the snow Wednesday was complete, the depth of the snow would have been, so, I wouldn't say unmanageable, but more difficult to remove and get it situated where we could clear

off pavement, roads and streets quickly," Handwork said.

Because the snow was very cold and dry, they were able to utilize equipment not usually meant for snow removal.

"We went and bought all the leaf blowers that we could get in town before anybody else thought of that," he said. "The backpack blowers were great. Especially Wednesday when a lot of our grounds staff worked during the day just keeping it blown off of the sidewalks.

Well yesterday (Thursday), it was real easy to clear because there wasn't much snow."

Priority went to clearing sidewalks around residential buildings and the Student Union.

"You start with the residence halls that do not have any kitchens because they probably have meals plans and need to get to the Student Union to eat," Handwork said.

They used leaf blowers, sweepers and skid-steer Bobcats to clear as much as they could

International students face snowstorm struggles



Photo by: Rani Faihin | Staff Photographer

AN NGUYEN

NEWS WRITER

Arkansas was hit by the snowstorm last week. Schools and universities had to close and police pleaded with people to stay inside. For those who do not own a vehicle like international students, things proved more difficult.

Shintaro Yano, a senior, said the snow caused him many troubles. Most of his classes were already online, so it did not affect his schedule much other than shooting videos at the studio.

"I was living in Tokyo and had a snow day like every two years," Yano said.

Right before the snowstorm hit, Yano had the chance to buy some groceries.

"Walmart ran out of food, so we went to Target," said Yano.

Thin Vu, a sophomore, said he feels like the weather is very unpredictable and displeasing.

"I really liked it at first because I have never experienced that before, and this area doesn't always have snow," Vu said. "Now I'm discouraged every time I go outside."

All of Vu's tests were moved into the same week as they had to be given in person. Vu also struggled with running out of food in the middle of the storm.

"It is hard to get food from places like Kroger or Walmart because other people have already stocked up their fridge," said Vu. "But luckily my friends still have food so we try to ration it out."

Hye Sun Choi, a sophomore, said that she developed an interest in the snow. She said while they do have snow in Korea, it rarely piles up like

it did in Arkansas. However, the storm stopped her from visiting her friend in another state and prevented her from getting to stores and restaurants.

Choi struggled with getting her work done because she prioritized her snow day activities with her peers.

"It was a little rough, but I'm used to online classes at this point so I guess it was okay," Choi said.

Similar to Vu, Choi also had to stock up and ration out her food. Since the temperature started to increase and the snow started to melt, she was able to go to the store again on Saturday.

Yano shared that he had been out to take pictures of the town covered in snow, and Choi said she loved making snow angels and snowmen. Vu did not get out and enjoy the snow because he said he thinks it is too powdery to be made into a ball.

CAMPUS CRIME

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Feb. 20 | 2:15 a.m.

A University Police officer was on patrol traveling down Johnson Avenue when he noticed the truck in front of him traveling at a high rate of speed. The officer said it seemed hazardous because the roads still had patches of ice. At 65 miles per hour, the truck was still quickly pulling away from him. He activated his emergency lights after the spotlight at Red Wolf Boulevard, but the vehicle failed to stop, so he activated his siren as well. Finally, the vehicle stopped in the Fat City Steak and Grill House parking lot.

The officer made contact with the driver, James Teague, and asked if he had seen his lights behind him to which he said, "I did, Broadway." The UPD officer then recognized him as a local law enforcement officer. Teague stated he was "just trying to get Mallory home."

There was a Miller Light beer bottle in the cup holder, and he told the officer it was from five hours prior.

Teague told the officer he should have stopped but his passenger was yelling at him. He questioned him about

drinking because of the open container and his glassy eyes. Teague was asked to step out of the vehicle for a field sobriety test to which he replied, "No, I mean, I'm good."

He continued to tell the officer that he was almost home and the open container was his passenger's. Teague finally exited the vehicle, removed his badge and gun and struggled to walk to the rear of his truck. After a field sobriety test, he was arrested for suspicion of driving while intoxicated. He was transported to the University Police Department and read the Blood Alcohol Content rights form which he refused to sign. He also refused to sign the Administrative License Suspension form.

A blood draw search warrant was submitted and signed by a judge, and Teague was taken to St. Bernard's. While a nurse attempted to draw his blood, he kept pumping his fist, making it difficult. He remained hostile the entire time he was at the hospital. He was then transported to the Craighead County Detention Center and given a court date of March 24.

Feb. 21 | 2:20 p.m.

An officer was dispatched to

as quickly as possible. After residential areas were cleared, they turned their focus to the academic core of campus.

The EOC had a much easier time making the call to move classes online as opposed to canceling classes like in years past.

"For classes that can shift their course delivery to online methods, it allows both the class and the instructor and students to not get as far behind as they may have in the past," Smith said. "While the pandemic may fade, snow is not going away. I think this is one of the benefits that we're gaining from our pandemic experience."

Handwork said his staff worked in 30 minute increments in wind chills below zero degrees.

"I am very very proud of my staff, and I almost get emotional thinking about how hard they work," he said.

In addition to clearing pavement outside, custodians worked inside buildings as people tracked in snow as well. Campus experienced a few broken water lines and some serious flooding in Collegiate Park, and Facilities staff worked to remedy the situations quickly.

"We just want to make everything as safe and comfortable and the best environment possible," Handwork said. "I just can't say enough positive things about the folks who were able to work, and I'm very proud of my folks that could not get here because they protected themselves and their families."