

Last month, I wrote what a great job our Town Employees and Fire Companies did during what I thought was going to be the worst storm of the winter. Little did I know that about a month later, we would have a Blizzard that some deem worse than the Blizzard of '77.

Our Town was very fortunate not to have lost any ~~life~~-lives during this past storm. Even with the warnings, I don't think anyone expected this snow event to be as bad as it was.

Many organizations, including the Town Hall, had closed on Friday, which thankfully reduced the number of people traveling in the morning. However, the Thruway closure sent many travelers to Transit Road and Main Street. For those ~~that~~ who were trapped from the storm and ended up at our Fire Hall or Town Hall Warming Centers, majority were not from WNY, or even this country.

More could have ended up in our Warming Centers if it wasn't for the immense effort by the employees of NYSEG working in the worst conditions restoring lost power to our residents. At one point as many as 3,000 residents lost power. Most restored in hours, but unfortunately, some areas lost power for a few days because of multiple poles being snapped behind Walmart on Transit.

Our Town Disaster Coordinators David Bissonette and David Baumler along with Highway Superintendent Jamie Dussing worked street by street identifying power losses and plowing paths with trucks and loaders to the downed lines for the power companies to repair. Aerial repair work is usually not done in winds above 40 miles per hour. NYSEG employees would make repairs on the ground or reroute power until the wind died down enough for them to rehang power lines. I am sure they were making repairs in winds well above 40 mph. Thank you NYSEG for all your hard dangerous work you did keeping us out of the dark during the storm.

Early on, even before the storm started, Highway Superintendent Jamie Dussing took the lead in preparation for the storm by staging plow trucks at our firehalls to escort our emergency vehicles. Jamie's actions helped protect lives and property assuring our emergency vehicles had a safe path to emergencies during the storm.

Our Highway Employees worked almost three days straight, napping on the floors of the Highway Garage, making sure our roads were the first (by days) in Erie County to be completely open. We had retired Highway employees come in during the storm and volunteer their time running heavy equipment and clearing our roads. Thank you, Jamie Dussing and Highway Employees, for your unselfish commitment to clearing our roads for our residents.

Our Parks Department was tasked with keeping our State Police and Sheriff Barracks open. With the Parks garage almost a mile from Main Street, personnel snowed-shoed to the garage to get equipment out. Parks employee Paul Meyer and Jeremy Gasiewicz transported stranded people and stayed overnight keeping things running at the Senior Center Warming Center.

Citizen Volunteers lead by Brandon Sutton manned the Senior Center Warming Center. 46 people were housed there during the storm before being moved to hotels. Thank you, Brandon and your volunteers, for stepping forward to run our Warming Center.

Our Fire Companies were tested to the extreme, like our Highway Department, answering a high number of calls during the storm and allowing stranded motorists to stay at their halls until they could be moved to the Town's Warming Center and local hotels. Our fire companies also had fire personnel

staying around the clock at their Fire Halls answering continuous calls and sheltering the stranded motorists.

Here is a recap of their emergency calls during the storm:

Chief Jim Quigley, and the East Amherst Fire Company answered 140 Fire Calls and housed 40 people.

Chief Scott Will and the Swormville Fire Company answered 25 Fire Calls and had over 430-man hours.

Chief Steve Pollard and the Harris Hill Fire Company answered 50 Fire Calls and housed 5 people.

Chief Paul Herberger and the Clarence Center Fire Company answered 29 Fire Calls and housed 48 people.

Chief Brett Handford and the Clarence Fire Company answered 40 Fire Calls and housed 25 people.

Thank you, Clarence Fire Companies, for giving up your Holiday away from your families and protecting us.

Though snow mobiles were one of the very few vehicles that could get through the snow due to high winds, they weren't useful in transporting people who were not properly dressed to be outside. Due to the high winds The North Eastern Snow Seekers, which is our local snowmobile club, used their Trail Groomer to move people in a heated cab. Rick McNamara and others from the club transported over 40 people in the groomer to safety during the storm. Using snowmobiles, they also transported many medical personnel to our hospitals.

Thank you, NESS members, for all your transportation help during the storm.

A special thank-you goes to Manager Matt Gatti of Dash's Market for keeping the doors open to supply food to our Fire Companies, Highway Department and Warming Shelter during the Storm.

Another special thank-you goes to Chris Morgan and Lou Visone for providing loader service to the fire companies escort emergency vehicles through the snow.

Last but not least, thank you to Shawn Dadswell, and his towing crew for going out in extreme conditions to rescue our stranded plow and firetrucks during the storm.

I am forever grateful to the incredible team at the various departments in our town that came together to keep everyone safe. I am sure I may have left someone out of this column that helped us during the storm. Please forgive me. I can't say enough good things about our town – if the actions during this storm doesn't prove how great our community is, then I don't know what will.