

City works with Y, Red Cross to prepare for weather

City of Dickson officials have coordinated with the Dickson County Family YMCA and American Red Cross to prepare options in case the incoming winter weather creates a need for shelters.

Mayor Don L. Weiss Jr. and senior staff met with YMCA Executive Director Paul Pitney and conferred with Disaster Program Manager Jay Lovendusky of the Tennessee River Chapter of the Red Cross and Dickson Electric System General Manager Darrell Gillespie Friday morning to coordinate emergency response plans should the anticipated weather cause issues for residents.

Pitney reported when temperatures drop below 18 degrees, the Dickson County Family YMCA at 225 Henslee Drive operates a Warming Station 7:00 pm-7:00 am for anyone who needs shelter from the extreme cold. The Y offers cots, showers and donated food for up to 100 people with volunteers manning the station. Pitney said the Y has 50 cots and Lovendusky said the Red Cross has a disaster response trailer with 25 cots staged at the Dickson County Emergency Management Agency. Dickson Police Department Chief Seth Lyles said the 267th Military Police Unit of the Tennessee Army National Guard loaned the department 25 cots from the Armory in J. Dan Buckner Park.

If the weather or widespread power outages creates the need, the Red Cross will begin operating the YMCA as a 24-hour shelter.

In a conference call with Lovendusky, Mayor Weiss said the City of Dickson will provide the Senior Activity Center and the Tennesco Community Center as backup shelters should the YMCA fill up.

Mike Osman, director of the City of Dickson's Office of Emergency Management, met with Lovendusky to review both locations Friday and an agreement with the Red Cross was completed.

The YMCA will serve as the primary shelter. If it reaches capacity, the Senior Activity Center at 100 Payne Springs Road will be the first backup shelter and the Tennesco Community Center at 115 Tennesco Drive will be the secondary backup, provided either of those locations does not lose power.

The Senior Activity Center's cafeteria will serve as the shelter, with bathrooms and showers and any cots that are available. Anyone sent to the Senior Activity Center or Tennesco Community Center for shelter should plan to provide their own bedding if there aren't enough cots.

"It might not be the most comfortable place to spend the night but it will be warm and safe," Mayor Weiss said.

At Thursday night's Finance and Management Committee meeting, City Administrator David Travis said the Public Works Department has been preparing for the incoming weather this week.

"Everybody's going to be on standby Friday when it starts – Friday night, Saturday morning, whenever, we'll be ready to start salting," Travis said. "We always go out to the industrial park first and start in that area. Even with it being the weekend, there's still a lot of people in and out of there, trucks moving freight and things like that. We hit that area first. Once we clean that up we start hitting the hospital drives, nursing homes, places where a lot of the heavy emergency traffic runs. So, we'll be hitting those areas and then once we get those we work over to Pump Hill (Road), Hillview (Drive), that kind of areas where some of those roads come off at steep angle that we've identified. We try to hit those, the hills over in Druid Hills. We have a route of priority streets then we move over to the secondaries."

Travis said the department has two full-size salt trucks and a third truck with a plow. He said the trucks will remain out clearing streets through multiple driver shifts. Travis said the city's bin is fully loaded with 120 tons of salt.

Mayor Weiss said the City has been in discussions with Dickson County Mayor Bob Rial about identifying a location in the William D. Field-Dickson County Industrial Park for a second salt bin. He said that would reduce the trips to address the roads in the park as well as the south end of the city. Travis said the city also is considering whether a salt bin could be located on the current site of Dickson Fire Department Station #2 in Pomona when a new station is built on Marshall Stuart Drive.

"We would like to have a bin out that way so we don't have to make so many trips back and forth," Mayor Weiss said. "Plus, that would also increase the amount of salt we could have."

Mayor Weiss said the City previously looked at using brine on the roads but decided the equipment needed and the cost of the brine "just didn't make a lot of fiscal sense at that particular time to even attempt that."

"It was a very large investment for just one or two events a year," Travis said. "And I don't know if the brine is as effective as the salt is."

The Public Works Department has announced that sanitation trucks will run normal routes as long as the roads are safe.

"With the possibility of winter weather this weekend, we want to remind everyone that trash routes will not run if the roads are impassable," the department announced on its Facebook page. "Our trucks are extremely heavy, which makes stopping, steering and overall control much more difficult on snow or ice-covered roads."

Depending on road conditions, sanitation routes could be run at drivers' discretion, meaning parts of some routes might not get picked up due to hills or other hazards. Those homes will be serviced on the first possible day when conditions improve.

More information on daily service will be available on the City of Dickson Public Works Department page on Facebook.

Leaf and brush pickup will be suspended if road conditions are hazardous.

The Tennessee Department of Transportation handles clearing of state highways and interstates. The Dickson County Highway Department handles clearing of roads outside of municipalities that have their own street departments.

On a call at Friday's meeting, Dickson Electric Manager Gillespie said crews are preparing to respond to any power outages caused by the winter weather.

In the event of widespread outages, Gillespie said the department's priorities are to restore power to hospitals and medical facilities in their five-county service area, emergency services such as police, fire and emergency medical, vital services such as water treatment facilities and clearing downed power lines in roads that could hamper clearing processes. The department then addresses outages ranked by the number of affected customers.

With its Advanced Metering, DES generally knows where service is interrupted but still encourages customers to report outages at 615-446-9051, according to its website. Gillespie stresses that nobody should attempt to move downed power lines.

For tips on responding to power outages, preparing for power restoration and other safety information, visit dicksonelectric.com and click on the "Outages" button.

OEM Director Osman advised residents to stay off the streets if possible and remain in their homes as long as it is safe and warm. Anyone seeking shelter should first go to the YMCA and

when it reaches capacity they will be directed to either the Senior Activity Center or Tennesco Community Center as long as either of them has power.

Anyone who needs assistance or information on services available should call the non-emergency number for Dickson County Emergency Communications at 615-446-8041.