WEATHER SERVICE:

GET PREPARED FOR BIG SNOW



Greenville Department of Public Works Snow plows are in a row and ready for the storm. PATRICK COLLARD/STAFF

Forecasters see as much as six inches by Wednesday morning

By Rudolph Bell
Staff Writer
dbell@greenvillenews.com

With the Upstate facing a big snow storm over several days beginning tonight, officials are recommending that the public stock up on food, bottled water, medicine, flashlights and batteries, and to charge cell phones and fill gas tanks.

The National Weather Service said as much as six inches of snow could fall in Greenville beginning tonight through Wednesday morning, with more snow possible during the day Wednesday.

On Sunday, officials hadn't yet decided whether to close schools, salt roads or establish emergency shelters, but they were getting ready.

"Monday will be the day to really watch the weather," said Derrec Becker, a spokesman with the South Carolina Emergency Management Division.

Justin Lane, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Greer, said the precipitation should begin as rain this afternoon and turn into snow sometime after midnight.

The heaviest snowfall is expected late Tuesday night and Wednesday before tapering off

See SNOW, Page 9A

"We made sure this past week that we were completely stocked and all the materials we'll need are available."

BOB MIHALIC
Greenville County spokesman

PREPARATION

» Officials recommend stocking up on food, bottled water, medicine, flashlights and batteries, and to charge cell phones and fill gas tanks.
» Greenville County has 1,000 tons of sand available
» 50 bags of sand and salt on hand to clear walkways and parking lots of public buildings
» American Red Cross of the Western Carolinas is ready to help establish emergency shelters

SNOW

Continued from Page 1A

Wednesday night, Lane said.

Temperatures are expected to hover near freezing from tonight through Thursday morning before rising into the 40s during the day Thursday, Lane said.

Oby Lyles, a spokesman for the Greenville County schools, said school officials have been watching the weather closely since Friday but weren't ready as of Sunday to decide on closings or delays.

School officials would like to make decisions as soon as possible, he said, "but that depends on the weather. We'll just have to see what happens."

Lyles said the school system uses a 25-member team to check conditions on roads and at 100 school or center sites.

Greenville city and county officials responsible for keeping roads passable said they were ready with crews, equipment and restocked supplies after snow combined with frigid temperatures left motorists slipping on black ice two weeks ago.

Mike Murphy, public works director, said the city is doing everything possible to avoid traffic problems.

"We've got everything geared up, ready to go," Murphy said Sunday, with city trucks and equipment in good shape and stockpiles of sand and salt solution replenished.

Murphy said the city's emergency operations team would likely decide this afternoon whether to "pre-treat" bridges, overpasses and steep grades in hopes of preventing ice buildup.

"We've got everything geared up, ready to go."

MIKE MURPHY
public works director

City crews use a hand-held, laser-like device to tell the temperature of bridge surfaces, which are usually five to six degrees cooler than the temperature of road surfaces, he said.

Greenville County spokesman Bob Mihalic said the county has replaced the 700 tons of sand it spread on roads and bridges during the season's first snow and now has 1,000 tons available. About 50 bags of sand and salt are also on hand to clear walkways and parking lots of public buildings such as County Square, he said.

"We made sure this past week that we were completely stocked and all the materials we'll need are available," Mihalic said Sunday.

He said the county would decide today whether to pretreat bridges and trouble spots.

Duke Energy was monitoring the weather with a team of meteorologists and ready to notify crews on the spur of the moment as outlined in its storm response team, said Lisa Parrish, a spokeswoman for the power company.

"We can gear up very, very quickly," she said.

Parrish said snow and sleet are easier on power lines and trees than freezing rain and ice, the culprits in the ice storms that occasionally leave parts of the Carolinas without power for days.

Volunteers with the American Red Cross of the Western Carolinas are ready to help establish emergency shelters across the Upstate and western North Carolina as they did during extraordinarily cold weather in early January, said John Wareham, a spokesman with the Greenville-based group.