

People Go Back To Work After Blizzard; Snow-Choked City Streets Slow Commute

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As many businesses reopened after the weekend blizzard, snow-choked roadways in Hartford slowed the commute and caused traffic to backup onto highways.

Traffic would have been worse but for the federal holiday that closed state government for the day.

Hartford officials said snow clearing efforts continued Monday and Tuesday, but several main thoroughfares, including Asylum Avenue, were substantially restricted by snow that not yet been pushed off the street.

The eastbound I-84 exit ramp for Asylum Avenue was backed up onto highway for much of the morning Tuesday, and on Tuesday afternoon, snow removal, car accidents and a car fire on the highway slowed traffic in and around Hartford to a crawl.

Main arteries in Hartford were better Tuesday, but entire lanes remained snow-covered. Right travel lanes remain blocked on many streets, including Asylum Avenue and Sigourney Street. Capitol Avenue was reduced too. People trying to turn left were causing backups at many key intersections.

Pedestrians walking on the narrower-than-usual streets because of unshovelled sidewalks further complicated driving.

Hartford Mayor Pedro Segarra said out-of-state contractors with heavy equipment are being called in to assist with snow removal in Hartford. He also said all main routes are passable and that 80 percent of side streets are passable.

Windsor Locks Fire Chief Gary Ruggiero urged residents to clear snow from the fire hydrants in front of their houses so firefighters would be able to quickly access water in the event of a fire.

"A lot of people are really good about clearing them out," Ruggiero said. "Others, not so much."

Classes resumed Tuesday in many communities, although some delayed opening. Hartford schools remained closed.

Gov. Dannel P. Malloy expressed concern Monday over the structural integrity of buildings after the number of roof collapses as a result of the blizzard increased to 16.

Most of the collapses occurred at residential buildings. The governor urged people to check their roofs to make sure they are structurally sound and to clear snow from them.

Most state colleges and universities reopened Tuesday, and Malloy said state offices and courts will open on Wednesday—after the federal holiday.

As the state works to clean up and as it prepares for another possible storm, Malloy said he is asking other states for help. So far, Pennsylvania and Maine have sent assets to Connecticut, he said.

Utility companies have started to help plow, and the state has freed up some of its state contractors to help cities and towns clear their roadways. State workers continue to work on state-owned roads. There is still work to be done on secondary state highways, the governor said.

Malloy said the state plowed snow throughout the duration of the storm, and he said he asked municipalities to do the same. Malloy said he is learning that not all cities and towns heeded his advice.

Deciding where to put the snow is a problem, Malloy said. Cities and towns are able to use waterways, but only after normal holding sites are full, he said.

The storm has also claimed several lives, including two people clearing snow in Manchester and a Meriden couple who went to listen to music in a

car Saturday night and were apparently overcome by carbon monoxide, police said.

New Haven police set up checkpoints Monday to enforce the city's travel ban.

The city expects about 95 percent of its roads to be passable on Tuesday, meaning that enough snow will be cleared to allow for emergency vehicles to pass.

Metro-North Railroad's New Haven to New York City trains will operate at about 75 percent of the usual weekday service level on Tuesday. Trains from Stamford to New York will operate at 95 percent, Metro-North said in a news release

Full service continues on the New Canaan and Danbury branches, while Waterbury service remains suspended.

Reclaiming The Highways

State road crews were out in full force.

"We still have all of our available equipment out on the roads," state Department of Transportation spokesman Kevin Nursick said. "We started this thing out with all the heavy artillery that we have and now we're moving onto even heavier artillery." He said full resources would be on the roads for at least another three days.

After they realized the magnitude of the blizzard, they brought in additional payloaders, about 150 of them throughout the state, and about a dozen industrial-sized snowblowers.

"These things are huge," Nursick said. "They would suck a car up and spit it out. It sends out a jet of snow 100 feet in the air ... this thing just gobbles up snow."

"When you have this much snow for one event, your typical four-lane highway gets whittled down to a two-lane highway," said Nursick, who explained that plowing alone can be futile because the more trucks push snow into steep banks the more likely it is to fall back onto the roads — they have nowhere to push it.

"You have 30, 40 inches of snow in a state. When you start plowing that off a 75-foot wide highway that starts to add up fast," he said, warning that the public will be facing snowbanks that are 10 to 12 feet high on the sides of the road and at intersections, affecting drivers' sight lines.

He said that it would be a least a week, potentially more, until they got the roads back to ideal traffic conditions.