

Coldest Here In 10 Yrs

Below Zero Readings In This Area

2-17-1958

The snowclad Shenandoah Valley shivered through the coldest day in ten years yesterday with the temperature dropping four degrees below zero at the Madison College weather station — the lowest reading since Jan. 25, 1948, when the mercury plunged to eleven below.

Residents on secondary roads found themselves again almost snowbound as the brisk winds filled the routes almost as fast as the State Highway Dept. trucks could plow them open. The main roadways were opened but snow blew over in spots and there were some icy places on grades.

Reports late last night stated that the Kratzer road has drifted shut and frozen for a distance of several hundred yards at a point just north of Harrisonburg.

School Again Closed

The Rockingham county schools will remain closed again today because the buses will be unable to travel the snow-drifted highways. The snow is so light and the wind so strong that efforts of the weary highway workers seem endless.

Highway Dept. spokesman said that this is one of the worst sieges of snow drifting they have ever battled and they are thankful that the snow was no deeper than the seven to 12 inches measured in spots. In many places, the snow was blown off the hillsides to fill the roadways. Some of the drifts were higher than an automobile and the snowplows had some difficulty in bucking them.

After the coldest night in a decade, hundreds of motorists awoke yesterday to find that their automobiles would not start. The motors were just too cold to turn over in many cases and the batteries were quickly exhausted.

(Continued On Page 4 Col. 2)

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(Continued from Page 1)

Others found they did not have enough anti-freeze in their radiators.

Garages Kept Busy

Service stations and garages found their service trucks and cars would not turn over, either, and had to be towed to get started. After the motor started running, it was not cut off in answering many calls.

Wreckers had to handle numerous cars stranded in drifts but State Police said there were not as many as in some years because all drivers had ample warning of the drifts. No drivers attempted to proceed without chains. There were reports that some sizes of chains were scarce because the steady run on them in recent weeks.

The day was one of the coldest that residents would like to remember. The high temperature for the day was 14, which normally would be the minimum for a very cold morning. The sunset reading at the Dale Enterprise weather station reported a sunset reading of seven degrees, which indicated another cold morning. The West Rockingham station reported a low of two below, the location being more protected than the station on the windswept hill of Madison College.

Cold Hampers Firemen

Firemen of Hose Co. No. 4 and Bridgewater fought a bitter cold fight against flames in the John Zigler home, on the Rawley Pike, west of Harrisonburg. The brick dwelling was virtually destroyed as the water the firemen attempted to throw on the building froze in the hose, in the pumps and in the nozzles. The fireman fought in the sub zero temperatures for four hours and many of them were nearly exhausted in the strenuous fight.

on their way to school. Both children had lost their shoes and said they had not had any breakfast before setting out.

The Coast Guard warned all small vessels not equipped to operate in ice that conditions in upper Chesapeake Bay are severe. Ice up to one foot thick was reported.

At Richmond, Harbormaster B. W. Miller reported 1 1/4 inches of ice over the James River from the head of navigation to Deep Water Terminal. He said the water was refreezing as fast as the city tug could break it.

A fourth death attributable to the snow, ice and unrelenting cold occurred yesterday in Charlottesville. Edward L. Deane, 39, slipped on ice and fell beneath a bulldozer which he had summoned to free his truck from a snowbank.

Earlier, two persons had died in accidents caused by slick spots on state highways, and another had died from a heart attack in Fredericksburg as he pushed his car away from a curb where it was stuck in the snow.

Some injuries were attributed to the storm. In Richmond, James Wallace, 86, was found nearly frozen in his home yesterday with burns on his arm, side and shoulder. There was no heat in his house and authorities said they did not know how he was burned. He was in a critical condition.

In the Halifax County village of Crystal Hill, Mrs. Ola B. Martin, 84, was critically burned when she stepped too close to a stove and the flames ignited her clothing.

Many rural schools in the state were closed Monday and planned to remain closed today. These included schools in Pittsylvania, Chesterfield, Henrico, Nottoway, Amelia, Lunenburg, Westmoreland, Essex, Halifax, Orange, Madison, Greene, Culpeper, Louisa, Dinwiddie, Albemarle and Richmond counties.