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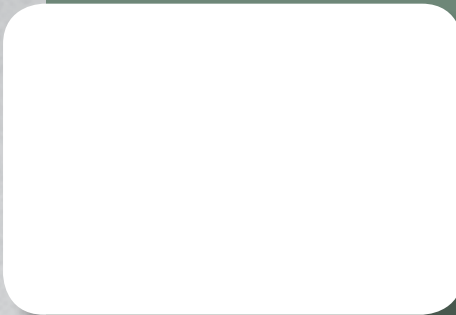
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NEW HAVEN CLEANS UP AFTER BLIZZARD

Charlotte dumped 34 inches of snow that took combined forces of DPW, private contractors and National Guard nine days to remove

By Paul Fournier

Working around the clock for nine days, the combined forces of the New Haven Department of Public Works (DPW), private contractors and the Connecticut National Guard removed thousands of tons of snow dumped by the February 8 and 9 blizzard on the state's second largest city.

Blizzard Charlotte blanketed the city with a record 34 inches of snow in just 24 hours – more snow than the historic Blizzard of '78. The enormous amount of precipitation was finally removed from New Haven streets and sidewalks by Saturday February 16.

To remove this much snow, the City had to enlist over 100 pieces of heavy equipment and trucks to plow, load and haul to disposal sites – about double the amount usually required.

By Wednesday, February 18, crews had removed enough snow to allow the reopening of downtown businesses for the first time since the blizzard struck. City Hall also reopened, together with Gateway Community College, the New Haven Free Public Library and Yale University.

New Haven Public Schools and Senior Centers would remain closed through the end of the week, allowing thorough cleaning of sidewalks as well as the removal of huge mounds of plowed snow from City streets and sidewalks. Parking bans in the downtown area remained in effect until the end of the week, and vehicles blocking passage of emergency vehicles were towed.



Heavy equipment initially moves snow that plow trucks could not, making roads at least passable to allow emergency vehicles to travel on a one-lane path.



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SITE-K CONSTRUCTION ZONE

Continued from cover »



Greg Sitek



New Haven Cleans Up After Blizzard

Owner:

City of New Haven, Conn.

Principal Snow Clearing By:

New Haven DPW, Laydon Industries, Connecticut National Guard



Laydon Industries' CAT loaders clear downtown section of New Haven, allowing businesses and Yale University to reopen.

“This is not an issue of convenience, this is an issue of public safety,” said the Honorable John DeStefano, Jr., the City’s ten-term mayor.

Garbage pick-up, having been suspended all week because every DPW employee was needed for the storm cleanup, resumed on Tuesday, February 19th, as did classes in the city’s public schools.

Reinforcements Needed

For normal winter storms the DPW, under Director Doug Arndt, fields a snow fleet consisting of nearly 30 snow plow vehicles, three front-end loaders, such small snow equipment as sidewalk plows and snow throwers, and if necessary, refuse trucks equipped with plows for extreme snowfalls. In addition, Parks, Board of Education and LCI (Livable City Initiative) Departments have snow plow equipment available for shared use if required. For backup, DPW has a contractor fleet of 13 trucks on call.

The City’s 225-mile road network is divided into 22 normal snow routes, each about 10 miles long, which take between three and six hours to plow. There are also six narrow routes overlapping normal routes plus seven arterial routes. Hills and intersections requiring special attention are also identified and are among the first locations addressed in winter operations.

Furthermore, DPW plows streets for the City’s Housing Authority, and together with Parks and the Town Green Special Taxation District, clears downtown sidewalks.

At the onset of a storm about 30 employees of the DPW’s Streets Division serve as first responders. These personnel are on standby for snow events for 12 weeks beginning in late December. They apply chemicals before a storm, do the plowing and load materials on city and contractor vehicles. They are supplemented by nearly 40 DPW Refuse Division employees who plow overnight before collecting refuse during the day. The Fire Department and the LCI help by contributing drivers who do so beyond their normal work hours.

All of these resources working together were no match for the February blizzard that battered the coastal city with high winds and heaped snow as fast as two to three inches per hour. Reinforcements were needed and private contractors were called in to help DPW crews with the plowing.

Obstructing Vehicles

New Haven contractor Laydon Industries, which has an annual snow plow contract with the City, had begun plowing high priority streets at 8 am Friday morning. Officials designated 30 streets as priority routes during the snow emergency, with parking allowed only on the even side of the streets. Because New Haven is an old city (established 1638) it was initially laid out in a grid pattern suitable for walking, with short blocks and narrow streets. These days, if storm parking restrictions are not followed, crews can’t plow streets properly. Therefore, vehicles parked on the wrong side of the street were ticketed and towed at owners’ expense.

A Volvo loader and New Holland backhoe loader are used by the Connecticut National Guard to place snow on Kenworth tri-axle dump trucks.



Left: CAT front-end and skid-steer loaders clear out piles of plowed snow after blizzard Charlotte dumped a record 34 inches on New Haven.



A Volvo loader and New Holland backhoe loader are used by the Connecticut National Guard to place snow on Kenworth tri-axle dump trucks.

Later in the day a downtown parking ban was imposed. To provide residents an alternative, the Parking Authority made five of its parking lots and garages available free of charge beginning at 3 pm. Additionally, the Parking Authority provided two of its garages for residents at a discounted rate. Yale University helped by making all but two of its numerous parking lots available to city residents.

Friday evening, when growing piles of plowed snow became a problem, Laydon switched its operations from plowing to snow removal and continued to do so for the next seven days. At times, the contractor had as many as 80 trucks and pieces of heavy equipment removing snow around the clock in two, 12-hour shifts.

National Guard Joins Battle

At 2:30 Saturday morning, February 9, with snow falling so fast city crews and private contractors were struggling to keep main arterials plowed clear, the National Guard joined the storm cleanup efforts. Clearing roads around hospitals, and then main roads, were the City's priorities at this time. The New Haven Fire Department directed this operation, ensuring there were access routes into all areas of the city. Sometimes even plow trucks got stuck in the snow, and front-end loaders had to be used to clear away enough snow so plow trucks could proceed.

Mayor DeStefano urged residents to stay home and stay off the roads until further notice. He added that drivers found on the streets would be stopped and challenged by New Haven police.

Realizing that disposal of plowed snow could become a serious problem for cities and towns, the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection announced that it was providing cities and towns with some flexibility to dispose of snow in salt water and certain waterways if all options for upland storage or other disposal methods had been exhausted.

Snow Disposal Sites

Fortunately, New Haven officials were able to find five sufficient inland snow disposal locations. Contractor Laydon maintained the sites continuously.

"We just kept dumping the snow and pushing it toward the back of the sites, and continued piling snow until the CAT 980 couldn't reach any higher, then we moved on to the next site," said company owner Jeffrey Laydon.



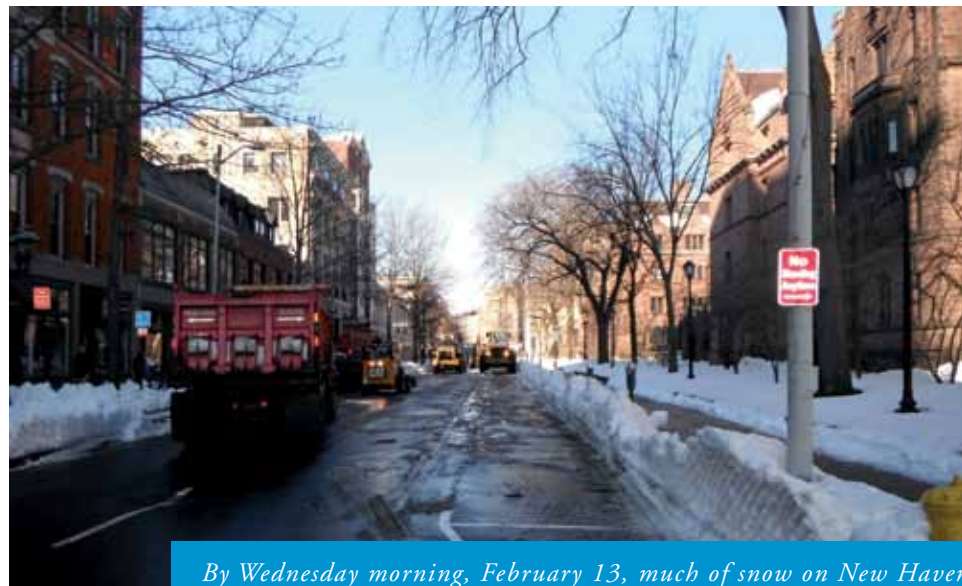
A fleet of tri-axle trucks moved hundreds of thousands of tons of snow to various disposal sites throughout the city.

The contractor said they had no one specific area of work in the city. "They had us go wherever they needed us. I think we worked in every one of the city's 22 snow plow route areas at one time or another."

He said that with the help of his subcontractors, he was able to provide about 60 trucks to haul and dump snow. He added that the subcontractors, S&S Asphalt Paving, American Industries, Haynes Materials, and A&J Paving, contributed multiple trucks on little notice.

By Sunday, New Haven crews, with assistance from the National Guard and private contractors, were making significant progress in clearing streets. At this time, the DPW had 30 heavy and 10 light duty trucks out plowing in addition to 15 front-end loaders.

All main arterial roads were passable, and loaders and plows were working to make secondary streets passable. According to the DPW, passable means enough snow has been cleared to allow an emergency vehicle to travel, usually on a one-lane path. Once all roads were initially passable, crews would return later for more extensive snow removal.



By Wednesday morning, February 13, much of snow on New Haven downtown streets had been cleared curb-to-curb.

Neighborhood Towing And Clearing

Once areas around hospitals, main arterial roads and secondary roads had been cleared, efforts turned on Monday to the city's neighborhoods, with plows clearing snow and day laborers shoveling out bus-stops, catch basins, sidewalks and intersections.

While the City's top priority at this time was clearing out neighborhoods, crews also began removing plowed snow from intersections and clearing a wider path for travel on main arterial roads.

By 5 pm, almost 120 abandoned cars impeding snow removal had been towed. To prevent more of these problems, New Haven police set up checkpoints at four entry locations to discourage non-essential travel.

On Tuesday, it was announced that 98 percent of city streets had been made passable. The snow cleanup fleet had grown substantially, and there were now about 95 trucks and pieces of equipment plowing and removing snow. The equipment consisted of 32 heavy-duty plows, 22 front-end loaders and 40 tri-axle dump trucks. Garbage pick-up had been cancelled for the week to allow all DPW employees to assist with snow removal.

Towing operations intensified that evening beginning at 6 p.m. on all streets posted as Snow Emergency Routes as well as on downtown streets. Police cars alerted residents to move their cars.

Downtown Reopened

On Wednesday, for the first time since the blizzard struck, the downtown was opened for business, as was City Hall, all branches of the New Haven Free Public Library, Gateway Community College and Yale University -- the city's biggest taxpayer and employer. This had been the first time in 35 years that the University had been closed.

Snow removal continued Thursday and Friday, with streets cleared from curb to curb, sidewalks plowed, and massive piles of snow taken away.

By Saturday, February 16, the prominent remnants of Charlotte had been carted from the streets of New Haven.

It had cost the City about \$1.6 million to clear the snow, including contractor costs, equipment costs and employee overtime. However, New Haven is anticipating some financial relief since President Obama declared Connecticut a disaster area, making the City eligible to receive up to 75 percent reimbursement from FEMA for qualifying cleanup costs.

A Punishing Storm

Since Friday, February 8th, crews had worked 24 hours a day in two 12-hour shifts. The blizzard left 408,000 tons of snow on the 225 miles of paved roads in New Haven, according to estimates by the Grey Wall software company. Plowing, loading and hauling this amount of snow continuously over a period of roughly 200 straight hours pressed personnel of the City, National Guard and contractors to their limits.

It also exerted costly punishment on the trucks and heavy equipment used in the effort, as support personnel, mechanics, equipment dealers and others labored to keep enough pieces operating in good condition for the duration of the massive cleanup.

Jeffrey Laydon commented that the all-out effort took a toll on his fleet of trucks and equipment.

"Even after the cleanup stopped our maintenance department was still working strong on a backlog of services and repairs to the fleet of plow trucks, loaders, and dump trucks we abused in this storm," he said.

He credited CAT dealer HO Penn for being extremely helpful during this trying time.

"They opened after hours -- early Saturday morning -- to get me two extra loaders once we realized the severity of the storm. They also provided me with onsite service twice during the cleanup. This was crucial as my five mechanics were extremely busy during the 24-hour-a-day operation that pushed the equipment to the max," he said.