



Even though city crews had cleared enough snow to make Main Street passable for motor vehicles, drivers still had to use caution. A large man-made windrow of the white stuff down the middle of the street narrowed the driving lanes considerably. (Photo by David Lias)

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care of other tasks made necessary by the heavy snowfall.

"The crews worked at doing things like clearing the parking lots at city facilities, such as city hall, to make them a lot more usable for the public," Prescott said, "and they had to haul those loads out."

City workers also began the rather tedious task of digging out every buried fire hydrant along Vermillion streets.

"After a lot of our snowstorms, that's not too big of an issue, but when you get this much snow at once, those fireplugs need to be dug out," Prescott said. "It's an ongoing effort. Our crews also have been cleaning out intersections, not only to help drainage for when this all eventually melts, but to also improve visibility for drivers."

There will be some other clean-up work that will take place. Streets will eventually get widened a bit more than they are now. They are passable, but some streets in some locations are little bit tight," he said. "There's a lot of follow-up work that needs to be done."

To the west, Kennebec recorded two feet of snow, while in the Black Hills, a location near Deadwood measured 37.2 inches.

Strong winds, with gusts sometimes reaching more than 50 miles per hour, created major drifting problems for city crews, homeowners and businesses during the blizzard. Downtown Rapid City reported a gust of 76 mph Friday afternoon.

Even on Sunday, with the winds reduced to about 20-30 mph, there were drifting problems in rural areas. Because of the Christmas holiday, there were very few activities postponed or canceled due to the storm. However, many church services were canceled.

Meanwhile, some property damage was also reported with the storm. A hog facility near Centerville had its roof collapse under the weight of heavy snow, the National Weather Service reported on its Web site.

In South Dakota, both Interstate 29 and Interstate 90 were opened to traffic by Sunday after both had been closed from border to border on Christmas Day.

The South Dakota Highway Patrol reported only one fatal traffic accident during the Christmas holiday period. That's down from four fatalities in two crashes in the 2008 holiday period.

The Highway Patrol reported 76 other injury accidents during the holiday travel period from Wednesday through Sunday, when roads were slippery because of ice and snow.

The Highway Patrol said it also responded to 145 non-injury accidents, received 336 calls to help motorists, and was involved in two searches and five calls for medical help.



A city plow deposits snow from the center of Kidder Street into a waiting dump truck Monday morning on Kidder Street. City crews were busy from midnight until noon Monday, hauling out over 400 truckloads of snow from just the downtown shopping district. (Photo by David Lias)

The Highway Patrol did not keep track of how many citations were issued for driving on interstate highways that were closed to travel because of a snowstorm.

Vermillion street crews began loading the windrows of snow lining the center of city boulevards at midnight Monday. A large snow blower attached to a tractor was used to transport the snow into waiting dump trucks.

"As of noon today (Monday), our crews had hauled out 412 loads out of the downtown area," Prescott said. "Obviously, there will be more snow removed from other areas."

The snow is being dumped into a city-owned gravel pit located near Harold Davidson Field in lower Vermillion.

The Vermillion City Council has budgeted \$64,500 for snow removal in during this calendar year. Before the Christmas blizzard of 2009, the city had spent approximately \$20,000 on routine purchases and activities, including the acquiring of salt and chemicals for slick streets, and the sharpening of snowplow and grader blades.

"The guys worked a lot of overtime this weekend, and that will come out of there," Prescott said, "but we should

be okay with the overall budget in terms of what we had left that we could have spent this budget year," Prescott said.

The city's arsenal of equipment that has been worked overtime following the storm includes five dump trucks, a large snow blower, and two motor graders. Some of the trucks are equipped with blades on the front to push snow.

The blizzard was part of an enormous storm system that pummeled the Central Plains from Texas to North Dakota.

Storms dumped 23.9 inches of snow in Grand Forks, ND, and 18 inches near Norfolk, NE. In the East, higher temperatures and rains have started melting and washing away last week's record-setting snowfalls, threatening the region with flooding.

The National Weather Service also issued flood warnings for parts of the South and Midwest, and winter weather advisories were in effect in sections of Nebraska, Illinois, Indiana and Michigan through Sunday.

Winter weather has been blamed for more than 20 deaths across the country in the past week. One of the lat-

est was an 81-year-old Iowa man whose body was found in a ditch Friday after his pickup truck got stuck in the snow and he tried to walk home.

The bad news is that temperatures are expected to remain below normal for the next week. The good news? There is no snow in the forecast for the next seven days.

*The Associated Press contributed to this report.*

## NEWS FROM THE SECRETARY

By SD Secretary of Agriculture Bill Even

### Farm to Market Roads: Ownership Equals Responsibility

Mud. This single, three-letter word has caused many South Dakota farmers and ranchers to consider using several four-letter words during the struggles of the past year. Between the wet, snowy spring that adversely affected calving, lambing, and planting to the moisture plaguing us at harvest, 2009 has been a difficult year.

Despite these setbacks, our all-too-familiar experiences with mud (and gumbo) serve to remind us of the need for good, high quality roads. These farm to market roads are indispensable to agricultural producers; without a way to get our crops and livestock out of the field and into the stream of commerce, our hard work would not show any return.

Our family farm near Humboldt is surrounded by four different farm to market roads—unimproved dirt, township gravel, county gravel, and a state highway. We use these roads throughout the year and are familiar with the use, maintenance and repair issues facing each of these jurisdictions. South Dakota has almost 75,000 miles of these roads and as producers we recognize that we could not run a competitive, 21st century agricultural operation without them.

Agriculture has changed dramatically in the 80 years since many of these roads were built. Our harvesting methods have advanced from horse-powered threshing machines to combines. The way we transport grain to market has improved from unlicensed 200 bushel gravity box wagons that paid no wheel tax to semi trucks with pups capable of hauling more than 1,300 bushels.

These improvements in technology increase efficiency, but they also place a greater burden on our roads—roads that we as taxpayers own and have a responsibility to maintain.

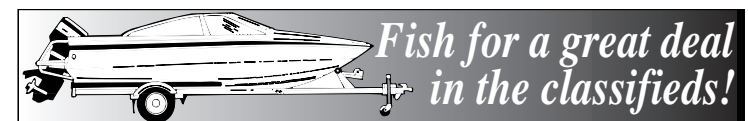
But road needs extend beyond agriculture as well. Rural residents, city workers who commute from small towns and acreages, businesses, and production agriculture all depend on these roads to facilitate commerce. They are crucial to our state's economic future.

Likewise, who owns the vehicles or what is in the vehicles does not matter. This is not an issue of class warfare, urban versus rural, or a laundry list of specific, isolated road problems. This is a question of road and bridge age and how we can strategically position ourselves to allow agriculture to continue to be a powerful economic engine for South Dakota.

Agriculture and its related industries have a \$21.3 billion economic impact each year and employ more than 173,000 South Dakotans. Today's farms and ranches operate in a global environment that transcends township, county, city, and state jurisdictional boundaries.

Our rural road needs transcend these same boundaries. The United States became a world leader by developing the best, most comprehensive infrastructure in the world. Ownership equals responsibility and we have an obligation to ensure our infrastructure can continue to support the demands of a modern economy.

We can continue to use a "band-aid" approach to help relieve specific pressure points in the short-term, but South Dakota roads require a comprehensive, long-term solution that recognizes our needs and adequately addresses the costs. Our economic future depends on it.



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