

## **Annex K: Severe Storms (Winter)**

### **Nature of the Hazard**

The City of South Portland is subject to severe winter storms and the effects of these storms. The Cumberland County Hazard Mitigation Plan, dated December 24, 2004, notes that Cumberland County experienced 91 winter storms between 1993 and 2003, for an average of about 8 large storms per year. Of these 91 storms, 42 were listed as major or heavy snowstorms, 22 were characterized as light or moderate snowstorms, and the rest of the storms were classified as snowstorms.

Severe ice storms, while infrequent, do occur along the coast. The ice storms of January 1998 caused over \$300 million in damages across the state of Maine. In 2015 over six weeks in January and February South Portland received 100 inches of snow and we had forty days with temperatures below 25 degrees.

### **Risk Area**

The entire city is subject to the effects of winter storms, because of the coastal nature of the city (located on the Atlantic Ocean and the Fore River) and because of the frequency of severe storms that bring large amounts of snow in a short timeframe to the area. The city is diverse enough geographically so that Public Works management reports that it can be snowing in one part of the city, and raining at the other end of the city.

### **Direction and Control**

Normal winter storm events are handled by city departments without any emergency assistance. If major snow or ice events occur, it is likely going to be a citywide issue, and therefore a scene specific Incident Commander is not anticipated. The Emergency Operations Center may be activated to manage emergency response actions. The Emergency Management Director (City Manager) may designate a senior department head or the EMA Director to manage EOC operations in response to flooding conditions.

### **Communications**

Normal city communications channels will be used to manage response to severe winter storm conditions. Such events are not likely to overload telephone, cell phone and two-way radio systems.

### **Warning**

Severe winter storm events may come with short advance notice or may be known hours in advance. In any event, areas or the city that may be in danger because of severe winter storms will be warned via methods described in the All Hazards Emergency Plan, including use of the EAS system, use of police officers and firefighters using bullhorns and other devices, using the emergency warning system designed for the hard of hearing and other means. Warning messages and methods will be coordinated by the EOC staff, if activated.

## **Emergency Public Information**

Emergency Public Information (EPI) will be issued as necessary by the EOC staff, through the Public Information Officer (PIO). Methods of EPI dissemination include using the TV camera mounted in the Joint Information Center (JIC). This JIC camera is connected to the SPC TV broadcast studio at City Hall, allowing emergency instructions to be broadcast through SPC TV to about 12,000 households in South Portland and Cape Elizabeth. News releases will be developed as needed by the PIO, approved by the EOC Manager, and then disseminated to the public through Portland area radio, TV and print media outlets as well as city website and social media sites.

## **Evacuation**

EOC staff would determine, based on current storm conditions, forecast conditions, road conditions, and other factors, if evacuation of the public were necessary. Appropriate evacuation routes would be developed in the EOC, approved by the EOC Manager, and then broadcast to the public via the EPI system described above. A combination of police officers, firefighters, public works staff, and appropriate barricades and other traffic control devices would be employed to effect the evacuation in an orderly and timely manner. Generally, evacuation would NOT be recommended for a severe winter storm, as evacuation during severe weather conditions may be more dangerous than having people stay put. If evacuation were appropriate as a protective action for severe storm conditions (e.g. ice storm with downed power lines, severe damage, etc) then appropriate transportation measures would be implemented (perhaps buses, or borrowing 4-wheel drive vehicles from local car dealers) to ensure a safe and expedient evacuation.

## **Mass Care**

EOC staff will determine if mass care facilities should be opened and manned. The primary mass care facility in South Portland is the Community Center on Nelson Street, behind the South Portland High School. Approximately 500 evacuees can be processed in this mass care facility. Other city facilities, including the High School can be used as mass care shelters.

## **Health and Medical Concerns**

Local medical resources are deemed to be adequate to deal with severe winter storm victims, who may suffer from storm related problems such as frostbite and hypothermia.

## **Resource Management**

Local resources are considered adequate to deal with severe winter storm events. If additional resources are needed, Cumberland County Office of Emergency Management will be contacted by the South Portland EOC and requested to facilitate the procurement of additional needed resources.

Once the storm has abated, resources from South Portland will be deployed to conduct preliminary damage assessment and assess the condition of transportation routes, neighborhoods, public utilities such as the water system and the electrical distribution system and other city infrastructure components.

## **Specific Action and Considerations for Severe Storms**

### Fire Department Actions

- Implement Hurricanes and Severe Thunderstorms SOG.
- Respond as requested by the EOC.
- Review and Implement Structural Collapse SOG, if storm damage causes building collapse.
- Assist with functions such as staffing city shelters, notifications, access control, checking generators, etc.
- Assist critical infrastructure facilities, including schools, the oil terminals, the Maine Mall, Diodes, Texas Instruments, Hannaford, etc. with implementing their emergency plans.

### Police Department Actions

- Work with the Fire Dept. to assist other city agencies and critical infrastructure facilities with storm preparations.
- Test all communications methods and evaluate options for alternate communications methods.
- Control access to danger areas as needed.
- Implement actions as requested by the EOC.

### Public Works Actions

- Evaluate equipment and material (trucks, barricades, sand, sandbags, etc) available for a major storm event and obtain additional resources as needed.
- Implement actions as requested by the EOC.

### EOC Actions

- Meet as an EMLT 48 hours before any storm that may produce gale force or higher winds or other methods of damage (anticipated storm surge, anticipated major precipitation, etc) and develop response and resource plans. Plan for 24-hour EOC and field operations.
- Staff the EOC 12 hours prior to the arrival of any major storm event that could produce gale force or higher winds.