

The storm

Residents took heed of warnings ahead of heaviest snow in years

Wintertime wallop

Weathering

By **Dave S** tafford Brown County Democrat

Brown County last week weathered one of the heaviest winter storms in years — including an estimated 9 inches of powdery snowfall Jan. 5-6 — with officials giving high marks to county highway crews and emergency services. By week's end, the county was grappling with a second significant snowfall.

As snow fell beginning the evening of Sunday, Jan. 5, a full crew from the county highway department — 12 drivers covering 12 routes — hit the roads for more than 12 hours on Sunday and Monday, and more than 10 hours on the days that followed, said highway department office manager Sandra Pool. She said highway department crews plowed and spread treated salt and sand on more than 350 miles of roadway in the county, including more than 200 miles of gravel roads.

Brown County Schools closed all week last week.

Superintendent Emily Tracy declared Monday, Wednesday and Friday eLearning days, and Tuesday and Thursday as traditional snow days, to be made up on Monday, Jan. 20 and Monday, Feb. 15. The first of those makeup days had been set as a school holiday in observance of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day, and the second had been scheduled as a school holiday in observance of President's Day.

Tracy said in a note to parents last week that the schools have used their allotted eLearning days for the school year. According to the district calendar, any future weather makeup days would be scheduled on April 11 or in the final week of May.

After the winter storm passed on Monday, Jan.

6, most main paved roads were clear by midday Tuesday,



Pictured: Brown County Highway Department trucks are loaded with stone on Jan. 8 to follow graders clearing gravel roads and smooth the road surfaces where needed. **Dave Stafford | The Democrat**

Reader photos

See readers' winter photos submitted to The Democrat on [Page B1](#) and online at bcdemocrat.com.

when crews began focusing on gravel through roads before clearing gravel dead-end roads.

In some cases, the highway department deployed a road grader to clear gravel roads. In those instances, trucks hauling loads of gravel followed the graders to fill in holes and smooth over the roads.

Brown County Commissioners praised the work of the highway department and emergency management as well as their efforts to keep the community informed.

"I got nothing but positive comments on the hard work of the highway department," newly elected Commissioners President Tim Clark said.

"Everybody stepped in," Commissioner Kevin Patrick said. "... It went well given the condition of getting the amount of snow we had."

Highway Department Superintendent Arec Burton told the commissioners last week that the storm had revealed a need for the department to double the size of an area used for mixing treated salt and sand. He said there is enough room to store the material, but not enough to mix and store them in sufficient quantity. As a result, some crew members had to stay behind and constantly mix batches to load onto trucks rather than working on roads.

"We did keep up pretty good," Burton said, noting that crews had to be sent home for their own safety late Sunday night when the storm intensified.

"We came back in the next morning and got back at it again," he said. Burton also noted that supplies of treated road salt and sand have had to be replenished.

Clark and commissioner Ron Sanders applauded the teamwork that produced the county's response. Sanders mentioned that pretreating roads ahead of the storm allowed the crews to plow roads down to the pavement.

"The amount of work that these people have done is astronomical," Sanders said last week of the highway department in particular.

"I don't know what the cost of this is going to be, but it's going to be substantial," he said.

Brown County Emergency Management Director Chad Jenkins told commissioners that early planning and preparations for the coming storm had helped keep people off the roads.

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“We talk about our responders and our dispatchers and our plow crews,” Jenkins said, “I think a really effective participant in this winter storm were our residents, who listened to the advisories and who complied with them and kept off the roads. That gave our plow crews a lot of space to get out there and work.”

Sheriff Brad Stogsdill agreed during the commissioners meeting Wednesday. “Seems like people heeded to our advisories, and that was nice that our citizens stayed home and they prepared. ... We had a few slide-offs, but nothing **Pictured from top:** The sun struggles to break through on a vista of State Road 135 north of Nashville as a winter storm passes through Brown County on Jan. 6. // Brown County Highway Department Superintendent Arec Burton, right, discusses the department’s response to last week’s winter storm at a meeting of the Brown County Commissioners on Jan. 8 alongside commissioners administrative assistant Theresa Cobian. // Snow piles up on an antique tractor and the boughs of a pine tree after last week’s winter storm passed through Brown County.

Dave Stafford and Dakota Bruton | The Democrat

major. Got through it pretty unscathed, and the highway department kept up with everything best they could, and I heard nothing but good things.”

Public comments online about the storm response largely echoed one sent to The Democrat from George and Tina Mc-Cormack of Hamblen Township. “I have lived in the county since 1988 and have never seen such an excellent response from the Brown County Highway Department,” George wrote. “I wanted to take the time to thank the Brown County Highway Department on the extraordinary job they did on cleaning the roads both pre & post snowstorm.”

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