Storm Emma
& Kildare County Council
Storm Emma

The combination of Storm Emma and the Beast from the East created a snow based weather event.

Widespread heavy falls of drifting snow occurred on 28th February, 1st, 2nd and 3rd of March.

Like many parts of Ireland, Kildare faced extremely hazardous conditions for almost a week with exceptional blizzards occurring.

Temperatures were as low as -10°C
R409 Road from Caragh to Mondello
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During Storm Emma many roads in North Kildare were blocked with 7-10 foot high walls of snow
For a period of time during the event travelling between North Kildare and South Kildare was not possible.
Kildare County Council Response

Planning Stage (Lead into Storm)

- KCC SWAT met on the Monday 26th February and activated our Severe Weather Plan

- Ongoing Winter Maintenance

- Communicating the warnings to the public

- All service areas were alerted to make advance preparations and to be on standby to respond

- Discussions held with HSE, An Gárdai Síochána and Defence Forces
Kildare County Council Response

The Event (Storm Hits)

• First light on Wednesday 28\textsuperscript{th} February SWAT convened by teleconference – Response elevated to Level 3 in accordance with KCC Severe Weather Plan

• Arrived a day earlier than expected

• 1 metre snow fall – 3 metre drifts – Roads totally impassable

• All meetings from then on – SWAT and Crisis Management Team

• Crisis Mgt Team and SWAT met over 18 times for Storm Emma (14 teleconferences)
Kildare County Council Response

Communications

- KCC Management Team/SWAT convened at least twice everyday from Tuesday 27\textsuperscript{th} February to Wednesday 7\textsuperscript{th} March
- Two Press Statements per day were issued to all media outlets
- Front page of KCC website contained all relevant information – Notices of road closures and openings
- Social Media
- Live interviews on local radio station three times each day
- Providing assistance for radio staff to get to work
- National media on occasions
- Councillors and Oireachtas members social media platforms
Kildare County Council Response

Regional & National Communications

• Regional Emergency Management Committee held teleconferences each morning and evening

• Each of these were proceeded by a Local Authority Regional Teleconference (6 LA’s)

• Daily reports issued to National Emergency Coordination Group

• Local Authority representative John Mullholland communicated on a regular basis
Council did not have the in house capability to deal with large volumes of Snow

Over 100 pieces of separate machinery were working to clear roads over 7 days

That we know about!
• Municipal District Engineers used established relationships with contractors to mobilise a response to deal with large volumes of snow that were beyond the capability of normal council operations.

• After the event KCC took the decision was made to pay all contractors that operated during the storm whether they had been requested to do so or not.
• 18 KCC Salting/Gritting Trucks fitted with snow ploughs

• Road crews were deployed during daylight hours

• Wherever possible the KCC vehicles operated as snow ploughs and salters but the reality was they could not access large parts of Kildare.

• They generally operated as snow ploughs in daylight hours only

• In some cases during the extreme snow falls getting drivers to their place of work was very difficult
Council Offices Closed for 3 days

• Decision made on Wednesday @ 07:15
• Only essential Staff requested to work
• Communicating the message
Closing Other County Council Premises

Parks, Playgrounds, Leisure Centres, Libraries

• Responsibility
• Communication of this information
• Is it possible to close all facilities
Fire Service

• Full time manning of all Kildare Stations for 24 hours

• Incident Commanders carried out dynamic risk assessments to determine the response for each incident

• Assisted the National Ambulance Service & An Gardai Siochana

• Generally Fire calls were low, however at a house fire in Athy on the Thursday night a 50yr old man was rescued and resuscitated

• All vehicles have appropriate snow socks for tyres
Civil Defence

7 off road 4x4 vehicles on the road each day
20 volunteers operating on a daily basis

Assisted
• KCC staff
• An Gardai Siochana
• HSE
• Vulnerable people
• Stranded Motorists & Truck Drivers
Communities are naturally resilient.
Community Resilience

Head office based in Kill, Co. Kildare

Undertook the clearing of roads in Kill and the surrounding areas
Kildare has numerous regional food & fuel distribution centres located in the County. It became apparent that these premises required assistance to get vehicles in and out of the centres.

**Strategic Outlook**

- Medical Care facilities & Ambulance Stations
- Nursing Homes
- Large employers not in a position to close down
- Motorways and Regional Roads
- Water supplies
- Potential flooding during thaw process
• Hagland from Dublin Civil Defence

• Irish Coast Guard Helicopter carried out a medical evac

• 2 Battalions from the Defence Forces spent days working in various towns

• Dublin City Council provided machinery to assist Kildare

Assistance from Other Agencies
Did the Planning and preparedness work?

- Throughout the various weather events a constant stream of information and advice came from the National Co-ordination Group and was backed up by each Principal Response Agency providing local complimentary information.

- Red Alert (nationwide)
M20 Kent

A52 Lincolnshire

Birmingham
In General the Kildare Experience was that people adhered to advice and stayed off the roads.
Financial Cost

- Kildare County Council annually spends €690,000 on Winter Maintenance

- Storm Emma cost an additional €500,000 which was recoupable from the Department

- The estimated cost in long term damage to Kildare’s road network is approximately €1.5 million
Lessons Learned

Review

• Performance review held 14th March

• Central coordination of local authority equipment

• Private contractors – Severe Weather Plan

• Mobility of essential KCC employees

• Communication – MapAlerter

• Direct communication with School representative bodies (KWETB)

• KCC Customer Service Team – Location flexibility

• Ability to track and respond to comments on social media

• National vs Local Message

• Formal arrangement and understanding with TII – Access to machinery
Clarity of Language

“That road is partially cleared”

“That road is fully open now”
Acknowledging the efforts and thanking staff for a job well done both Nationally and Locally.
Questions?