

EMA meetings keep first responders, public informed

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Last week brought several inches of snow and two days of canceled school to Union County, and first responders stayed on top of it all to ensure that everyone remained safe through the wintry weather.

Snow moved in Monday night into Tuesday, and continued to fall Tuesday morning, causing Union County Schools Superintendent Gary Steppe to call off school that day, and then Wednesday, as road conditions remained questionable into the morning.

Students returned to school Thursday following a two-hour delay, and Friday was already a scheduled off day on the schools' calendar.

Thursday night brought another little blast of snow, and many woke up Friday morning to a good flurry that faded and then disappeared altogether as the morning progressed.

Reports began coming in Thursday, however, of a big winter weather system threatening to move into North Georgia Sunday evening – a storm bigger than what the county had seen so far this year.

“We went from one foot of snow to almost a tenth of an inch of ice,” said Union County Fire Chief and Deputy EMA Director David Dyer on Sunday, Feb. 14. “They’re calling for no snow here now, but there’s more rain coming in here after all of this – over an inch of rain.”

Chief Dyer was just one of the many first responders to attend various emergency weather meetings at the county’s EMA headquarters in the Union County Fire Station No. 1, which Sunday saw a downgrading of weather status from Winter Weather Advisory to Freezing Rain Advisory.

Going from a foot of snow to no snow with the chance of ice was a rather large change in the narrative between Thursday and Sunday, and Chief Dyer said that dramatic changes to forecasts have been typical of late, but not representative of the norm.

“Usually they’re pretty confident in it, but of course, the changes come in pretty quick – this front is a little stronger than they thought,” said Chief Dyer. “We had our first weather briefing Thursday, and they were saying that this was going to be high impact from what models that they had.”

“Of course, the closer you get to it, the better models pick up, and more consistent they are, so we’re pretty happy with the last reports that they had – we’re pretty confident in them.”

The good thing about using prediction models – even



One of Blairsville’s snow plows works its way through a wintry day



Commissioner Paris, Union County Schools Associate Superintendent Dr. Jeremy Williams, and Capt. Doug Loyd of the Union County Sheriff’s Office attended Sunday’s EMA meeting.

if they turn out to be incorrect days ahead of time – is that the constant updates allow first responders to prepare for any situation.

“We always get prepared,” said Chief Dyer. “We start lining up resources and making sure that we have everybody that can possibly go on a call, or if we have any issues. When we get a little bit closer to this, we always plan for the worst case scenario.”

“The worst case scenario for us is if it’s over a quarter inch of ice, or if there’s over 4 inches of snow, that’s going to be a significant event, so that would be something we always get prepared for.”

By Saturday, Feb. 13, Union County EMA had its emergency plan together for just such a worst case scenario, but as the models changed, the weather Monday backed up the newer information, and no snow and very little freezing rain arrived on Monday.

The plan called for the fire department to maintain more personnel at Station No. 1, as well as volunteers in the main volunteer stations, which was still implemented despite the better conditions.

“As soon as they get there, they check off their trucks and make sure everything’s ready to go for any kind of weather event, and they just get prepared to go to any call that might be in that area,” said Chief Dyer. “We were prepared Saturday for Monday, and we

were just watching to make sure that the reports were consistent, and that our resources were lined up.”

Emergency weather meetings offer the public a great way to stay on top of the latest weather data, especially at the Union County Fire/Rescue & EMA Facebook page, which always has up-to-date information as to what residents can expect.

“We like to make sure that everybody is informed,” said Chief Dyer. “You can watch the weather on the news, and you can get two or three different channels, but ours is straight from the National Weather Service.”

EMA meetings bring in leaders from all over the county, including Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris, the Blue Ridge Mountain EMC, the Road Department, the sheriff’s office, Blairsville Police, EMS and others.

Upcoming Seabee Ball

On March 5, 2016 Navy Seabee Veterans of America Island X-3 Blairsville, GA will hold an Anniversary Ball in recognition of the 74th Birthday of the U.S. Navy Seabees. The Island would like to invite you to help us celebrate the Seabee Birthday. The Ball will be held at the Union County Community Center. All information and tickets can be purchased by contacting: Bob Ramay at (706) 781-2536 or email: bobramay@windstream.net ... only 150 tickets are available. Come help celebrate the Seabee Birthday.

Minor injuries in crash at Chick-fil-A

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

A two-car collision nearly sent a Ford F-150 flipping into the parking lot of the Chick-fil-A restaurant on SR 515 on Friday, Feb. 12, though injuries to those involved were minor, according to the Blairsville Police Department.

According to witness reports, the green truck was heading westbound on 515 when a gold Infiniti SUV pulled out into the road from the United Community Bank parking lot, making a left across the path of the F-150.

The truck attempted to avoid the SUV, but was struck in the rear, causing it to spin around rapidly before flipping and coming to a rest on its top on the embankment between the restaurant and the road.

A driver and a passenger in the flipped truck were taken away on stretchers, according to witness reports, and the driver of the SUV also went to Union General Hospital by ambulance, though all were reported to have been conscious as they left the scene of the accident.

As Georgia State Patrol worked the scene, Blairsville PD directed traffic around the crash site, and many vehicles used the Chick-fil-A parking lot as a detour around the accident.

A Georgia State Patrol crash report was not available as of press time Monday.



A state trooper investigates the accident that occurred in front of the Chick-fil-A restaurant on Friday, Feb. 12.

Union County Lions Club Trash and Treasure event



The Union County Lions Club 5th Annual Trash and Treasure event will be held on Saturday, February 27th from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Civic Center, 165 Welborn Street, Blairsville. Come join us for a day of shopping, friends and food.

Early bird admission is \$1 from 8 a.m. to 9 a.m. After 9 a.m. admission is free. The kitchen will be open for breakfast and lunch. Call 706-781-3599 for more information.

LOCAL BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT

SalonTru
Excellence in Organic Hair Care
706-781-3015 • 417 Blue Ridge Street
Book Online at www.vagaro.com/salontru
Susan Anderson • Glory McGinn
Lindsey Gaylord • Sarah Jane Serra
Valorie Carter • Sasha Watson

WAZOO! QUILTING
Longarm Quilting
Commission Quilts
Quilt Restoration
Quick Turn Around
Located in Blairsville, GA
706-781-1423

SHAWN'S HOME FURNISHINGS
Mattresses, Porch Rockers & More!
“From the Front Porch to the Back Door We've Got You Covered!”
568 Blue Ridge St. • Blairsville, GA
FREE DELIVERY! 706-835-1209
Mon-Fri 9am-6pm • Sat 9am-4pm • Closed Sun

THE Mountain Life TEAM
Call us today - (877) 633-8186
TheMountainLifeTeam.com
KW KELLER WILLIAMS REALTY PARTNERS

TOTAL RECOVERY
PAINT & BODY
(706) 745-9703
391 BLUE RIDGE HWY
ALL INSURANCE ACCEPTED

Trail Rides at Trackrock
Winter Horse Ride Special
1 hour guided trail rides ~ \$25
706-745-5252
Offer Expires March 10, 2016
Additional Restrictions Apply—call for reservations
www.TrackrockStables.com

Declare your financial independence. Call today.
Flip Varney
Financial Advisor
178 Bracketts Way Suite 2
Blairsville, GA 30512
706-835-1385
www.edwardjones.com
Edward Jones
MAKING SENSE OF INVESTING

MORTGAGE FINANCIAL GROUP, INC.
If you are looking for Great Service, Competitive Rates and Fees, Look No Further!
JENNIFER JOHNSON, Branch Manager NMLS#190999
253 E. Hwy 515 Suite D • Blairsville, Ga 30512
706-745-LOAN (5626) • 706-897-2406 (Cell)
jennifer@mfglends.com • www.MFGLends.com
Licensed Mortgage Lender NMLS#219650

BILL POTTS All Lines of Insurance
INSURANCE
HOME, AUTO, COMMERCIAL, LIFE & HEALTH POLICIES!
Cheli Collins 706-745-7845
P.O. Box 2835 706-781-6489
281 E Young Harris St Blairsville, GA 30514 Pottinsurance@windstream.net

eXpress Auto Repair
Certified Foreign & All Domestic Automotive Services
“You don't need to take your luxury car to Atlanta anymore!”
Mercedes, BMW, Audi, Porsche
Toyota, Honda, Kia, Infinity, Mini
And all Domestic. CLEAN & ORGANIZED!!!
- We Locally Service What Others Can't -
CALL: (706) 835-1481
Mon-Fri. 9am to 5pm.
1538 Old Blue Ridge Hwy.

ASPAVING DIVISION INC.
706-400-2988
DRIVEWAYS
PARKING LOTS
SUB DIVISIONS
TAR/GRAVEL
Commercial • Residential

Affordable **HEARING AID SOLUTIONS**
706-896-0051
Debra D. Spaulding
Hearing Instrument Specialist
71A BERRONG STREET • HIWASSEE, GA
411D HIGHWAY 515 • BLAIRSVILLE, GA

Persaud Jewelers
BLOWOUT SALE!
50% OFF Storewide
37 Young Harris St, Blairsville, GA
706-835-6365

FREE ESTIMATES
All Materials Furnished
Installing Insulation
Hanging Sheetrock
Finishing Texturing
RICH DRYWALL
Young Harris Hwy.
Blairsville, GA
706-745-5307

PLACE YOUR AD HERE!
Advertise with other Local Business here in the Blairsville area!
Contact Joe Collins
706-835-8769
or 706-745-6343

Lucretia Collins
mountainandlakerealty.com
(706) 781-5698 Cell
(706) 745-8097 Office
253 E. Hwy. 515, Suite B,
Blairsville GA
RE/MAX Town & Country