

Emergency services in Edinburgh

✖ Lothian and Borders Fire & Rescue Service have promised to maintain a good service during this time of adverse weather.

LBFRS Personnel are continuing to deliver vital emergency services through bad weather conditions. They say that every effort is being made to ensure that sufficient resources are in place to enable fire crews to respond to emergency incidents.

Around twenty-five firefighters have stayed back to keep fire engines on the run and allow colleagues more time to report for duty. This has meant staff willingly working slightly longer shifts to ensure adequate cover.

Staff have also arranged, where possible, to stay local to their stations (with family, friends or colleagues) in order to ensure they are able to get to work.

Duty officers have the use of 4X4 vehicles to allow them to keep mobile and respond to incidents.

All fire engines remain on the run except Whitburn which is currently being covered by Livingston and Bathgate fire stations.

We have responded to a number of house fires in the past few days with response times remaining at an acceptable level.

On some occasions if fire appliances have been at an incident for a prolonged period of time, crews have had to dig vehicles out when leaving.

Chief Fire Officer Jimmy Campbell said: "We would like to reassure the public that every effort is being made to keep

fire engines on the run and ensure that the people of Lothian and Borders will have the response they need should a fire break out or they are involved in a road traffic collision or other serious incident.

“I would like to thank our staff for their dedication and commitment in making every effort to report for duty and ensure, as much as is possible, a business as usual approach.

“There is no doubt the current weather situation brings challenges for all the emergency services. The public can help by heeding safety messages, avoiding unnecessary travel and where they do need to travel making sure they have taken all appropriate precautions for a safe journey.

“With more people using real fires at this time of year, and electrical appliances there is an increased risk of house fires. People should make sure they have a working smoke alarm and follow the fire safety/winter weather advice which can be found on our website at www.lbfire.org.uk” .

Lothian and Borders Police are also aiming to keep all services manned at this time. Although the majority of main arterial routes are passable with extreme care, the Force advice to motorists is to only venture onto the roads if the journey is considered to be essential.

In those circumstances, Police recommend drivers check weather forecasts before heading out and take extra care, especially when driving on untreated roads.

A Force spokesman said: “Most roads have experienced significant snow falls overnight.

“It is very unusual for the Forth Road Bridge to be closed and is an indication of the seriousness of the traffic problems being faced by motorists in the Lothian and Borders area.

“Side roads in particular will have had further builds up of

snow and driving on them could be extremely challenging.

“Motorists are also urged to make sure their windows are properly cleared so that they have best possible vision and all snow accumulations are removed from their vehicles before they set out.

“They should also have warm clothing, a flask containing a hot drink, plenty fuel and take other common sense precautions such as leaving additional stopping space.

“Checking the Traffic Scotland website is advised during this period of early winter weather.”

Despite the adverse weather conditions, Lothian and Borders Police are reassuring the public that Force staffing levels remain high.

Senior officers are in place within all divisions and the day-to-day duties continue as normal.

Chief Constable David Strang, who chairs the Lothian and Borders Strategic Co-ordinating Group, has been in daily contact with the chief executives of the local authorities and all partner agencies are working closely together to continue to serve their communities.

West Lothian Council has invoked its severe weather emergency plan.

While heavy snow and ice has impacted upon travel across the country, front line policing has been largely unaffected in Edinburgh, the Lothians and the Scottish Borders.

A Force spokesman said: “The Force is doing everything it can to keep normal practises in place and our communities can take peace of mind from the commitment of all staff who have braved the weather to make it to work.”

✘ The Maritime and Coastguard Agency report that they have

been able to help other services reach their place of work. Forth Coastguard received a request for assistance from the NHS based at Fife requesting help in transporting essential medical staff.

Two intensive care nurses were collected from their homes and transported to the Queen Margaret Hospital at Dunfermline. Kinghorn Coastguard rescue team transported the two nurses utilizing their 4 X 4 rescue vehicle in treacherous conditions.

Simon Ward, Watch Officer, Forth Coastguard said:-“We are pleased that we are able to assist our colleagues in the NHS. We all have a common aim, in the preservation and saving of life.”

✘ The Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) is responsible for protection of the environment. They said:-“Following the recent heavy snowfalls there is now extensive snow cover over much of Scotland, in excess of 40cm is lying in some catchments in the east of Scotland (including parts of the Borders, Perthshire and Aberdeenshire).

The pattern of any thaw of lying snow will depend very much on prevailing weather at the end of the present cold spell.

At present the forecast is for the very cold weather to continue for the next few days at least, and probably into the weekend. Little or no melt of the snowpack is expected.” However when the thaw does set in there could be areas which are at risk of flooding but SEPA is keeping the situation monitored.

Wondering why your pavement has not been cleared of snow? Well this is the official word on the subject – except that we know of many pavements in the city centre where the snow has not yet been cleared.

“The Pavement Category 1 routes, which cover the City Centre and the high level areas in Balerno, Gilmerton and Liberton,

will be the first to receive treatment whenever weather conditions dictate and will be pre-salted, where possible, when snow is forecast.

The Pavement Category 2 routes incorporate other central urban shopping areas and precincts, urban shopping areas along the main arterial routes and other busy pavements including routes to hospitals and schools and will be treated after the Category 1 routes are safe for pedestrians.

The pavements on the remaining weather affected priority treatment routes (Category 3) are treated prior to the treatment of other affected pavements.

The remainder of the weather affected pavements that are maintained by the Council will be treated after the Category 1, 2 and 3 routes are safe for pedestrians.”

The [BBC](#) reports that some community councils have complained about the lack of snow clearing from pavements in their areas.