

**Mayor's column for
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Whether it's just our nature as human beings or lack of faith in weather prognosticators, we seldom believe it when we hear that a "major storm" is coming our way. Then, as the projected time draws near, the storm always slows in intensity or veers off at the last minute and misses us. Not so with the as-yet-unnamed windstorm of December 14.

This storm came as advertised! As my wife and I sat in our living room watching transformers blow up in a bright blue frenzy, it was clear we would at some point lose power, as would all of Edmonds. It didn't take long for the house to go dark and to get cold. We had prepared with some candles and flashlights. As I listened on my scanner to the reports of trees down, power lines down, and roads being closed, I wondered how long the power would be out.

About 11 p.m. I heard a call that gave me shivers: a fire alarm at an Edmonds care facility. I called the fire chief and he reassured me that it was not a fire. A tree had crashed onto the building and broken their sprinkler system pipes, activating the fire alarm. Either way, it appeared that the facility would have to be evacuated. The chief and I were quickly on the road, dodging branches flying through the air to get to the scene.

While it all ended well, there was much discussion by the facility's management about how the evacuation should be handled. In the end, fire crews finished their work and left the evacuation of residents to the management team. With such a widespread power outage, it would be a daunting task.

The next morning the chief and I toured the city looking for damage (eerily reminiscent of a tour we took after the 2001 earthquake). We found a multitude of fallen trees, downed lines, and closed roads. A home in Woodway erupted into flames as we were driving around, so we responded to it as well. Once our city tour was completed, we stopped at Public Works to report what we had found. Then we went back downtown, grabbed a mocha at Starbucks, and I returned to my office for several afternoon meetings, which took place without power or heat. Around 3 p.m. the power was restored to most of Edmonds.

Throughout the weekend I tried to keep tabs on neighborhoods in Edmonds where power had not yet been restored. My contact at PUD was very informative and a great help. For the record, she was there day and night when I called, weekday and weekend! And she was always pleasant. Come Monday morning, with power still out in some areas, she told me the location of the crews in Edmonds, and I paid them a visit.

The crews were from Idaho and weren't familiar with what neighborhoods would get power when they finished their work. I gave them some geographical information and they promised to check out one particular neighborhood to make sure their power was restored. A couple hours later as I drove through the power-less neighborhood, I saw the crews doing exactly as they promised, looking for any further localized damage before attempting to "flip the switch." Still later, they were back in their original location preparing to make the final fix. They promised me the power would be restored within minutes.

As I drove back to the neighborhood, I was hopeful for these folks as I had spoken to many of them throughout the day. Interestingly, most of them I had not met before, and some clearly had no idea that I was the mayor. I had heard their "survival" stories and their innovative cooking methods. And I had felt their growing frustration. I felt a smile come to my face as lights, especially Christmas lights, began to glow in the neighborhood. I saw people in their homes

clapping and dancing. PUD crews had solved the problem and life would soon be back to normal, or at least warmer!

This storm was a warning to us all. The inconvenience that we all experienced should be a reminder to be prepared. Whether it's another weather event, a terrorist tactic, a pandemic sickness, or an earthquake, we will be tested again. Will you be more prepared for the next one?