



Winter Storm 'Fern' *After Action Review*

City Council Work Session
March 19, 2026



City of Annapolis
EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Presentation Objectives

- Provide an high-level overview of Winter Storm “Fern” and impacts.
- Review preparedness, response, and recovery efforts.
- Highlight identified strengths and areas of improvement for future incidents and events.



Winter Storm “Fern”

Forecast and Expected Impacts



8-10" of snow, freezing rain, up to 0.2" of ice and life threatening wind chills.



Dangerous road conditions;
Travel disruptions



Cold-related illness



Infrastructure disruptions



Downed trees and wires

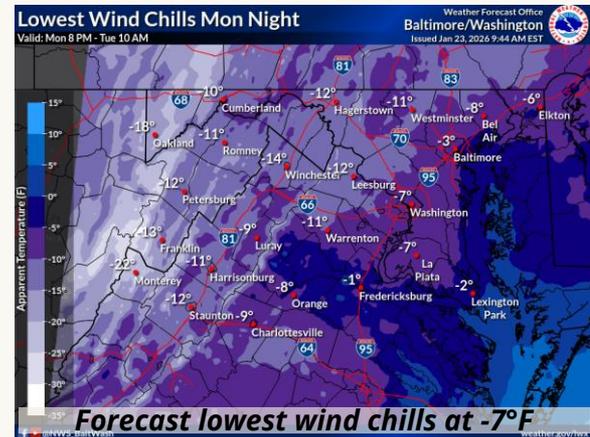


Possible power outages



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Additional Impacts



Increase in Special Assistance Roster inquiries and requests



Increase in winter storm-related calls for service and support



Supply chain issues with vendors



Emergency repairs (e.g. water main)



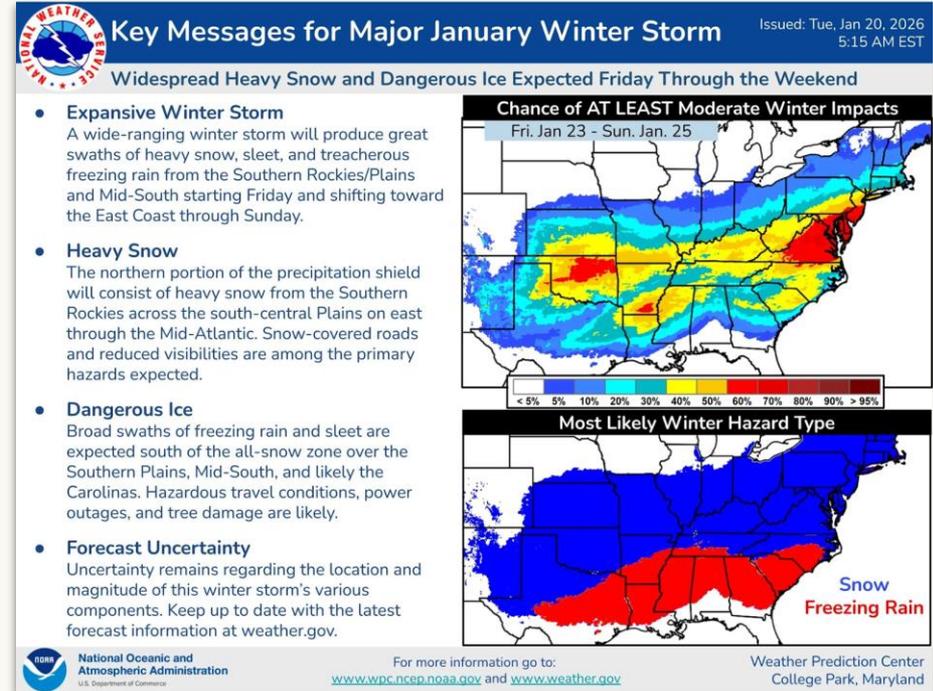
Vehicles Stuck in Snow



Supply Chain Issues Result in Outside Resources

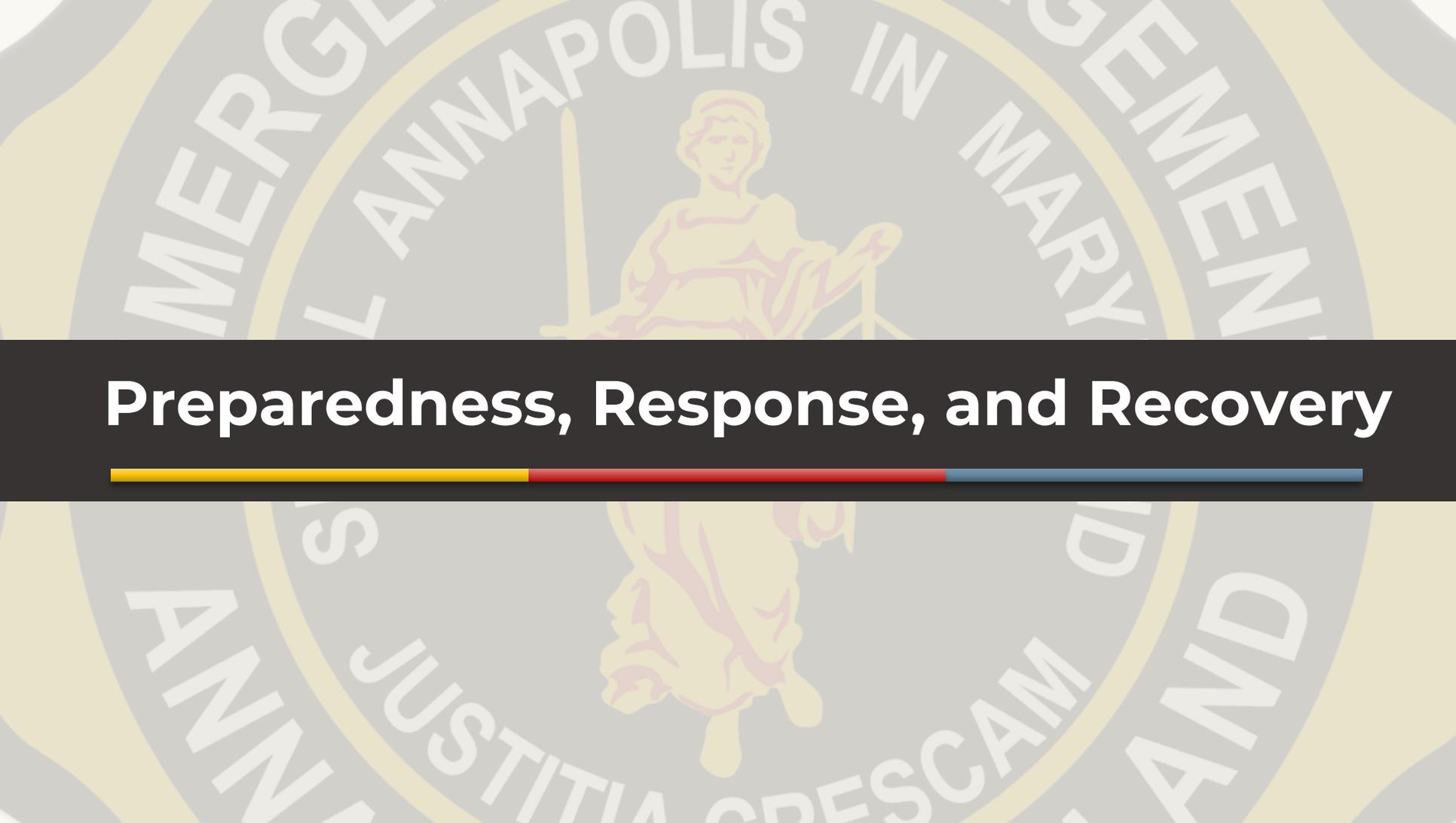
What Made This Storm Different?

- **High forecast uncertainty**, making it more difficult for jurisdictions to prepare in advance.
- **Prolonged heavy sleet and freezing rain**, which created a dense ice layer (“snowcrete”) on top of existing snow.
- **Extended period of dangerous cold** that continued even after the snowfall ended.
- **Standard road treatments were ineffective** due to extremely low temperatures and ongoing winter precipitation.
- **Ice and packed snow became extremely difficult to remove**, often requiring specialized or commercial equipment.



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Preparedness, Response, and Recovery

Pre-Event Coordination

Routine Preparedness Actions

- 2025 Winter Season After Action
- Conducted Winter Weather Tune Up
- 2025 Citywide Exercise - Winter/Ice Storm
- Hosted EOC Refreshers for EOC Representatives

Event-Specific Preparedness Actions

- Pre-event Operational Coordination Calls
- Public information and alerts



Organizational Structure



Senior Policy Group: Mayor, City Manager, Public Works Director, Emergency Management Director, City Attorney, Police Chief, and Fire Chief.



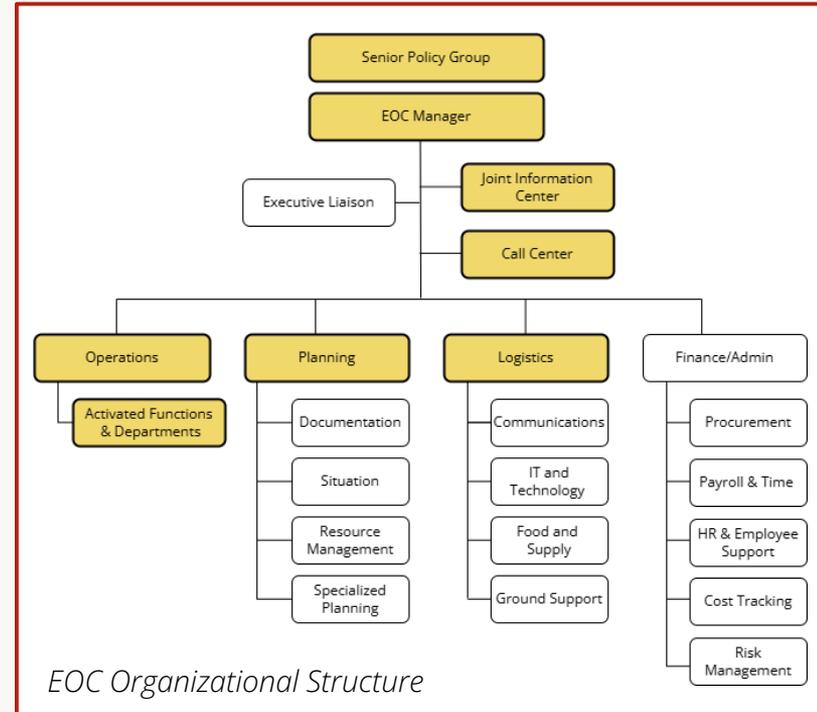
Emergency Operations Center (EOC): Partial activation; Location where the winter storm is managed; Staffed by EOC representatives from departments and agencies.



Joint Information Center: Centralized location where all public information activities and elements are coordinated.



Call Center: Responds to non-emergency inquiries from the public regarding the winter storm. Staffed by City departments.



Incident Objectives and Priorities



Protect life by ensuring timely response to winter storm-related emergencies, prioritizing medical incidents and other life-threatening situations.



Maintain effective coordination and situational awareness via the EOC by monitoring weather conditions, operations, and impacts, and sharing timely updates with City leadership, partner agencies, and the State.



Maintain essential City services by ensuring the continuity of critical operations, utilities, and emergency communications operations.



Track, manage, and coordinate resources to ensure operational needs are met, external assistance is requested as necessary, and preparations are made for subsequent operational periods.



Ensure timely and responsive support to external customers, including the public, partner agencies, and stakeholders.



Maintain public order by ensuring timely and effective emergency response functions.

Initial Actions



Emergency Operations Center (EOC) activated.



Snow Emergency Plan; Phase 3 Snow Emergency declared.



State of Preparedness (MD), State of Emergency (MD), State of Emergency (Annapolis) declared.



Opened City garages for free parking to allow access to Snow Emergency Routes.



EOC Activation



Public Safety Coordination

Snow Operations

- (1) Salting, (2) brining, (3) plowing, and (4) snow and ice removal, (5) SnowPaths
- Phase 3 Snow Emergency may be proclaimed by the Mayor, in consultation with the Director of Public Works, Chief of Police and Director of OEM, when the local forecast projects greater than 8" of snow.
- Phase 3 benchmarks (*post-snowfall*)
 - Emergency routes within 102 hours
 - Connector routes within 126 hours
 - All other routes within 150 hours
- Snow Emergency Routes – 27.9 miles
Snow Connector Routes – 19.6 miles
All other streets – 45.5 miles
93 miles total of snow routes



External Aid & Resource Requests

- Resource requests were processed and managed via the EOC during this event.
- Maryland Intrastate Emergency Management Assistance Compact (MIEMAC) allows for emergency management assistance between jurisdictions in the compact.
- MIEMAC request to the state for National Guard assets.
- MIEMAC request to the state for snow equipment and personnel.
 - 3 Salt Trucks (only used 1 day)
 - 2 Loaders (used 3 days)
 - 3 Triaxle Dump Trucks (used 3 days)



Annapolis Call Center

Call Center staff and EM staff received **745 calls** over the course of the entire winter storm event.

The majority of calls were related to:

- Plowing
- Sidewalks
- Parking/Garages
- Icy Roads/Road Salt

This event generated the highest call volume of any Call Center activation to date.



Supporting Vulnerable Populations

Special Assistance Roster

Voluntary, confidential registry maintained by OEM to identify residents who may need additional support before, during, or after emergencies.

OEM and partners conducted **special assistance roster checks** during the storm and **registered new individuals** throughout the event.



City of Annapolis Special Assistance Roster

The Special Assistance Roster is a voluntary, confidential registry maintained by the Annapolis Office of Emergency Management (OEM) to identify residents who may need additional support before, during, or after emergencies. Individuals with access and functional needs, such as mobility challenges, chronic health conditions, sensory impairments, or lack of critical transportation for evacuation, are encouraged to register. **In the event of an emergency, dial 9-1-1.**

La Lista de Asistencia Especial es un registro voluntario y confidencial mantenido por la Oficina de Manejo de Emergencias (OEM) de Annapolis para identificar a los residentes que puedan necesitar apoyo adicional antes, durante o después de una emergencia. Se alienta a las personas con necesidades de acceso y funcionales –como dificultades de movilidad, condiciones médicas crónicas, discapacidades sensoriales o falta de transporte para evacuar– a registrarse. **En caso de emergencia, llame al 9-1-1.**



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Winter Relief Program

The Warming Center was activated for a total of **204 continuous hours** for this winter storm event.

Patron Visits: 464

Staffing: Multiple activations exceeded **31+ patrons** which require an additional staff member to be called in.

Staffing Costs: \$8,740.00



Volunteers

The City received support from the Naval Academy's Midshipman Action Group. After the snow stopped, volunteer midshipmen took to the streets to help clear snow for neighbors in need.



Public Information & Engagement



Press Releases: Ten (10) releases sent throughout the event, focusing on preparedness, snow operations, and resources for the public.



Communication Platforms: Social media, Alert Annapolis, Prepare Me Annapolis app.



EM Alerts: Seven (7) EM Alerts were issued throughout the duration of the event.



Additional Call Centers and Constituent Support: Public Works departmental call center, Mayor's Office, City Council members.

CITY OF ANNAPOLIS
OFFICE OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Emergency Management Alert
FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY | DO NOT TRANSMIT

Winter Storm Warning & Cold Weather Threat
Alert #3 • Date: Jan 23, 2026 Time: 5:03 PM

Situation Summary

The Office of Emergency Management (OEM) is continuing to monitor the winter storm and dangerous wind chills anticipated to impact Annapolis this weekend.

The National Weather Service (NWS) has issued:

- Winter Storm Warning** has been issued and will go into effect tomorrow night at 11:00 PM through Monday morning at 4:00 AM.
- Cold Weather Advisory** will go into effect beginning at 8:00 PM tonight to 10:00 AM tomorrow morning.

The Director of Public Works has declared a **Phase II Snow Emergency**, effective at 8:00 PM on Saturday, January 24, requiring vehicles to be moved off Snow Emergency Routes for the duration of the event.

OEM will continue to monitor this outlook and provide additional information and alerts as needed. **Be prepared for any National Weather Service (NWS) or Emergency Management alerts that may be issued.**

Forecast

Winter Weather Precipitation

Precipitation onset will begin around 10:00 PM tomorrow night, initially as snow, and will continue into late Sunday morning before transitioning to a wintry mix of snow, sleet, and freezing rain. **Chance of precipitation is 100%. Snowfall rates during this period may exceed an inch per hour at times.**

A wintry mix of snow, sleet, and freezing rain is expected between 10:00 AM and 6:00 PM on Sunday, then transitioning to just freezing rain until early Monday morning. Chance of snow flurries are possible Monday morning following the

PRESS RELEASE
City of Annapolis
Public Information Office
160 Duke of Gloucester Street
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
Media Contact: Mitchell Stephens, 410-972-7724 or mwstephen@annapolis.gov

Update #8: Winter Storm Updates
Parking and Government Operating Status

ANNAPOLIS, MD (Jan. 27, 2026) - The City of Annapolis will return to normal operating status on Wednesday, January 28, as the City continues efforts to dig out from Sunday's winter storm. The Department of Public Works (DPW) is continuing plow and treat operations and working their way into neighborhood streets now that all Snow Emergency and Connector routes are clear. As of 6 p.m. on Tuesday, 90 percent of City streets have been plowed. If your street has not been plowed, please contact the Call Center at 410-260-2211.

"NEW" GARAGE PARKING: Free parking at City garages (Dills, Hillman, Gitts, Kingdon, and Park Place) will be extended until 4 p.m. on Sunday, Feb. 1. This extension has been granted to allow more time for all streets to be plowed and to give residents more time to clear driveways, sidewalks, and parking areas. Residents who can park on their street are encouraged to do so, so that businesses and downtown employees can also access garage parking.

SIDEWALKS: As announced early in the day on Tuesday, DPW has suspended sidewalk clearing code enforcement for individual residential properties. For Wednesday, this suspension holds. Commercial property enforcement is ongoing, and the City may issue warnings where sidewalks remain uncleared. Enforcement action could follow. When conditions improve, enforcement will follow a phased approach, beginning with warnings before citations.

GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS: City of Annapolis government offices will open on-time on Wednesday, Jan. 28 with liberal leave and telework options in place. Before taking liberal leave or choosing telework, employees must have the approval of a supervisor.

REFUSE AND RECYCLING PICKUPS: Trash and recycling pickup schedules have changed for this week. If your regular collection date is a Monday, pickup will be on Wednesday. Tuesday collections move to Thursday. Thursday moves to Friday and Friday to Saturday. There is no metal bulk pickup and no yard waste pickup this week.

WARNING CENTER: The Pig Moyer Recreation Center auxiliary gym will be open as an emergency temporary warming center every day until Monday, February 2nd, at 7 a.m. If there is a need for general or long-term sheltering assistance, please contact the Crisis Response System Warmline at 410-268-9322.

The City Of Annapolis
★ Favorites · January 24 ·

Couple of quick reminders before the storm rolls in: ... See more

BARE PAVEMENT **PASSABLE** **PASSABLE**

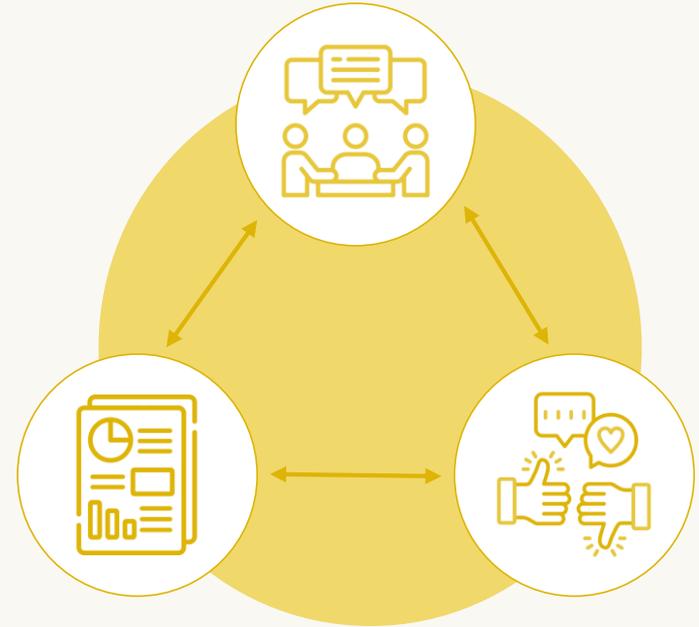
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After Action Discussion

After Action Process

- Provide an open, honest, and anonymous forum to collect feedback.
- Received comments from leadership, departments, and partners that had a primary role in the preparedness and response for the winter storm.
- Noted public comments and suggestions from Call Center interactions.
- Reviewed corrective actions from last year's winter season.



Snow Operations

Strengths

- Including DGS in pre-event coordination and planning*
- Utilization of hotels to ensure emergency essential personnel availability
- Utilization of steel blades and other specialized equipment
- Responsive to the changing needs of the incident

*Action item from 2025

Snow Operations (Cont'd)

Areas of Improvement

- Improving on continuous hours of operations to support variety of snow and ice removal tactics
- Snow plow tracking software did not support operations and policy level decision making as expected
- Look into additional locations of snow disposal sites for high-accumulation events
- Utilization of additional outside resources - contractors, state assistance, emergency contracts
- Ongoing action items from last year's winter season (e.g., legislation, posting current snow emergency plan online)
- Trash collection; especially where residents use dumpsters
- Snow removal for non-City owned roadways within the City
- Include sidewalks in the snow plan



Sidewalks

Strengths

- Better communication for residents to set expectations
- Ensured attention and considerations for “Safe Walk to School” routes

Areas of Improvement

- Consider equipment specifically assigned for sidewalks
- Enforcement clarification for non-City owned sidewalks within the City

Parking & Towing

Strengths

- Majority of streets were cleared of vehicles to allow snow operations on emergency routes
- Garage announcement were made earlier to allow more residents to help clear the emergency routes
- No towing related to the winter storm

Areas of Improvement

- Period of free garage use expired, but some residents had limited parking due to snow and ice at their residence

EOC Operations

Strengths

- Activated 24/7 over 11 operational periods; Activated at the appropriate levels at the right times; Incorporated the right people
- Resource management (e.g., State resources and National Guard)
- Preparedness and response activities (e.g., coordination calls, EOC Action Plans)
- Vulnerable populations (Special Assistance Roster and Warming Center)
- Senior Policy Group and EOC Teams

Areas of Improvement

- Increase volunteer capability among residents
- Lack of Call Takers impacted EM staff availability for operations

EOC Operations: Senior Policy Group

Strengths

- Senior Policy representative was available with 24/7 coverage
- Collaboration and continuous assessment as conditions evolved, with decisions supported by the best available information at the time.

Areas of Improvement

- Formally designate an overall incident commander, per the emergency declaration, to oversee the implementation of objectives and operations.
- Provide senior leadership and elected official training to support decision making for large and/or complex incidents.

EOC Operations: Annapolis Call Center

Strengths

- 24/7 operations throughout the winter storm; Almost 800 calls total (taken by 2-3 staffers per shift).
- Supported by trained City staff (2) that served as call takers

Areas of Improvement

- Increase depth in call takers from City departments to allow EM staff to perform Emergency Management operations.
- “Circle Trap” and multiple points of constituent access.
- Evolving operations created a gap in information to the call center, leading to a lack of follow up to some residents concerns.



Public Information & Constituent Services

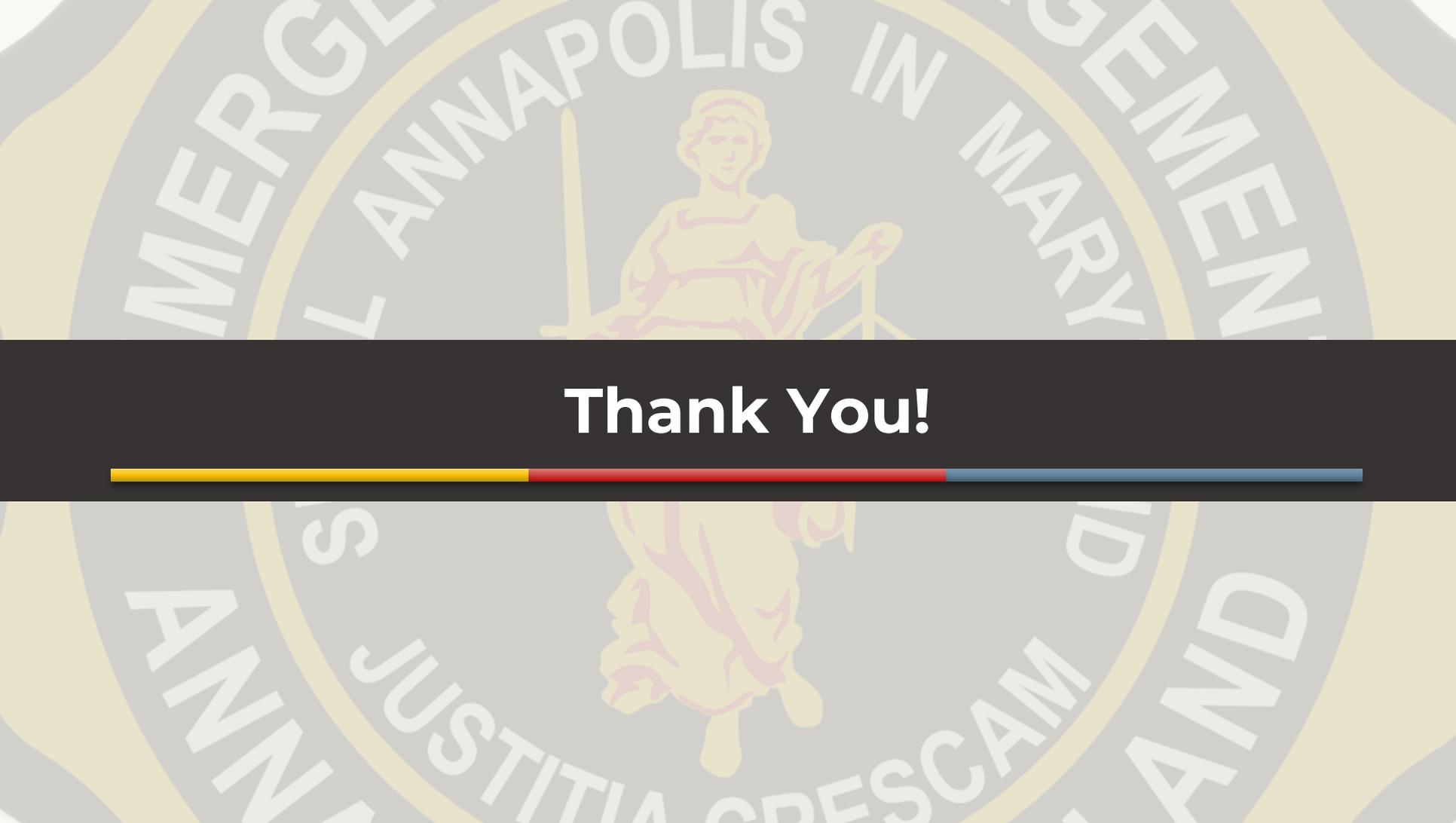
Strengths

- Consistent and relevant messaging
- Various methods of dissemination (e.g., council members, social media, press releases, emergency alerts)

Areas of Improvement

- Setting expectations earlier in the season; providing more “actionable” communications*
- Need depth in public information officer capability*

* Action item from 2025



Thank You!
