

Motorists are warned off roads in big storm

STRATFORD / ONTARIO / THURSDAY JANUARY 26 / 1978

By Thelma Morrison
staff reporter

A storm featuring an unusual combination of high winds, rain and snow descended on Perth County today closing most roads and schools in the area.

At 8 a.m. today the storm had dropped 14.4 mm. of rain and 3 cm. of snow on the city. A wind warning is in effect with gusts of up to 85 kmh predicted. Weather forecasters are calling for another 15 cm. of snow and temperatures are expected to drop this afternoon.

Highways in the area were described as slippery with visibility poor to nil. The only road officially closed was Highway 8 to Mitchell but the ministry of transportation and communications was warning motorists not to drive.

Area police were "rushed off their feet" this morning dealing with a rash of minor accidents. Sebringville OPP were too busy today to give out accident reports although a corporal there said a number of cars had slid off roads in the area. Woodstock and Lucan OPP pulled its cars off patrol this morning because of zero visibility while the New Hamburg detachment reported a serious accident near the Baden cutoff on Highway 7 and 8 (See story page 3). Listowel OPP was not as hard-pressed. A spokesman there reported only one minor accident.

In Stratford, city police reported a string of multiple car accidents, especially on Highway 7 and 8 east of the city. An accident about 8:30 a.m. at McKone's Corners near the eastern city limits resulted in a pile-up of cars but no serious injuries were reported. At 10

a.m. today police were investigating at least 10 accidents. Police also reported a number of false alarms overnight, probably the result of the high winds and rain.

In Stratford city buses were pulled off the road about 9 a.m. and city plows and garbage trucks were also taken off the roads. Gray Coach buses were not running although CN reported no problems with trains in and out of the city.

All rural schools were closed and only in-town school buses in St. Marys were running. Stratford schools were open this morning but closed at noon. Exams scheduled for today at secondary schools in Stratford, Mitchell and St. Marys will be

held tomorrow instead.

A prankster caused some alarm this morning by spreading a report that school crossing-guards were not on duty. A Perth County Board of Education spokesman said the report was false. School principals were calling parents to reassure them and to inform them of plans to close at noon.

The storm also caused some power failures, the worst of which was a two-hour blackout in the east end of the city around the Stratford Mall. It began about 4 a.m. when high winds caused a television antennae to fall across a high-voltage line. A tree down on Charles Street about 8 a.m. caused a 40-minute power failure in several homes

and a similar situation on Inverness Street caused the power to go off in one house. Most of the city experienced minor power failures overnight because of icing problems on Ontario Hydro lines.

Most city industries were operating with slightly-reduced staff this morning but some had plans to close if the storm continued. City postmen started their rounds today but soon returned, unable to see or make their way along open stretches of road. Rural delivery was cancelled.

Bell Canada reported no serious problems except a delay in dial tone caused by overloading of circuits. Area manager Jim Scott said too

Snowstorm...STOP

By Betty Steckley
staff reporter

*Snowstorms may come
Snowstorms may go
Remember this citizens
The beginning of the blow*

*Although the store hours
Have been extended
Our weatherman here
Hath the merchants offended*

*For last night was the beginning
When merchants hoped you'd shop
But the weather intervened
And brought all traffic to a STOP.*

many people were trying to make calls at the same time.

"So many of our lines are buried now that these storms are not the nightmare for us that they used to be," Mr. Scott said. "If the storm continues and more ice does form on above-ground wires we could have problems then. The difficulty there is that in this weather we probably couldn't get out to make repairs."

Most serious were conditions in the county with visibility close to zero. Most county residents were stranded at home.

Lakeside News

In spite of the bad roads on Sunday morning there was a good turn out at the United Church service and specially good attendance at Sunday School. Next Sunday, Feb. 5th, the Sunday school hour will be from 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. and church service will be at 11:15 a.m. Rev. Brown will be on vacation and Mr. Russell Tusau will be guest speaker.

Good Church Turnout Despite Storms

The Sunday school held their Annual skating party on Sunday afternoon at the Lakeside rink. There was a terrific turnout of children large and small and all had a good time. A lunch of hot dogs and cold drinks were served by the mothers. Many thanks to the men and boys who shovelled the snow from the roof of the rink for safety's sake.