

**CITY OF  
PROVIDENCE  
REVIEW OF  
DECEMBER 13,  
2007 SNOW  
STORM**

## **REVIEW OF CITY OF PROVIDENCE RESPONSE DURING STORM OF DECEMBER 13, 2007**

On December 14, 2007 Mayor David N. Cicilline directed Colonel Dean Esserman and Chief of Administration John Simmons to conduct a thorough review of the events of December 13<sup>th</sup> that led to Providence school children being stranded in gridlocked buses late into the evening.

The review team over the past week interviewed City of Providence School Department Officials, the Director of Communications, Public Works and Providence Emergency Management, the Chief of the Fire Department and members of the Police Department as part of the review. Documentation was received of their Departments' activities in preparation of and actions during this snow event.

The information gathered during this review is being forwarded to Mayor Cicilline for his review.

## INTERVIEWS RELATED TO EVENTS OF DECEMBER 13, 2007

The following individuals were interviewed by Mr. John Simmons, Captain Hugh Clements and Major Thomas Oates regarding information related to their activities on December 13, 2007.

December 18, 2007 Chief George Farrell of the Providence Fire Department was interviewed at 7:30 AM. Chief Farrell supplied information and documentation related to himself and his Department.

December 18, 2007 Director John Nickelson of the Department of Public Works was interviewed at 8:15 AM. Director Nickelson supplied information and documentation related to himself and his Department.

December 18, 2007 Director Leo Messier of the Department of Emergency Management was interviewed at 9:00 AM. Director Messier supplied information and documentation related to himself and his Department.

December 18, 2007 Lieutenant Gerald DeLomba of the Providence Police Department was Watch Commander from 3:00 PM to 11:00 PM. He was interviewed at 9:50 PM and supplied information and documentation related to his and the Department's activities.

December 18, 2007 Director William Trinque of the Department of Communications was interviewed at 1:45 PM. Director Trinque supplied information and documentation related to himself and his Department.

December 18, 2007 School Department Officials were interviewed at 2:15 PM. Interviewed were Dr. Evans, Mr. Hanna, Mr. Thibeault, Ms. Rose, Ms. Carpenter, Mr. Gary Muroch. Department officials gave information and documentation related to their activities.

December 19, 2007 First Student officials interviewed at 9:50 AM. Mr. Tony Murgio Regional Manager and Mr. William Roche Contract Manager gave information and documentation regarding their actions as First Student employees.

December 19, 2007 telephone interview at 10:00 AM with Mr. Raymond LeBelle Executive Director of State 9-1-1 Emergency Telephone Division. Supplied limited information and documentation readily available from E-9-1-1

## **Documentation Collection**

1. School Department Timelines
  - a) Evans
  - b) Hanna
  - c) Rose
  - d) Thibeault
  
2. Police Department Timeline
  - a) Lt. Gerald DeLomba
  - b) Capt. Campbell letter
  - c) Sgt. O'Brien letter
  - d) Sgt. Patridge letter
  - e) Sgt. Lopardo letter
  - f) Sgt. Kennedy letter
  - g) Sgt. Gannon letter
  
3. Communications Department
  
4. Fire Department Timeline
  
5. Emergency Management Timeline
  
6. Public Works Timeline
  
7. School Department Timelines
  - a) Evans
  - b) Hanna
  - c) Rose
  - d) Thibeault
  
8. First Student Documents and Emails
  
  
9. RI DOT Traffic Report After Action

**TIMELINE OF RESPONSES TO STORM RELATED EVENTS IN THE CITY OF PROVIDENCE DURING DECEMBER 13, 2007 STORM**

5AM: PSD receives weather report from Ocean State Weather Service.

8:30AM: Director of Operations PSD received update from Ocean State Weather Service that the weather system would arrive in Providence earlier than anticipated. Update was snow to begin after noon and would intensify between 1PM and 2 PM

9:00 AM: Superintendent is notified that PSD would have to consider an early dismissal as a result of the updated forecast

District Supervisor of First Student after checking weather forecast emails PSD questioning early release time.

9:26 AM: First Student District Supervisor sends memo to all staff and mechanics advising of possible early dismissal. Drivers still at First Student asked to stand-by

9:30 AM: First Student District Supervisor calls PSD Transportation Supervisor. PSD Transportation Supervisor advises he is waiting to hear Superintendent's Office on dismissal decision

10:00 AM: PSD Executive Team recommends to the Superintendent that schools be dismissed two hours early. Dismissal for the following:

12:05 PM 3 select Elementary Schools

12:35 PM Middle and High Schools

1:05 PM All other Elementary Schools

Buses are scheduled to arrive at 12:05, 12:35 and 1:30 PM

10:45 AM: Decision to dismiss two hours early finalized and communicated to RI Broadcasters, Connect Ed message was sent, schools, transportation, food services, etc. were notified of the decision upon clearance from the Mayor's Office

Per the Snow plan, this decision has historically been made by 10:30 AM

11:00 AM: District Supervisor of First Student notified by PSD Director of Operations of 2 hour early release. First Student District Supervisor staff begins call back of bus drivers

11:00 AM: (RIDOT Report) Heavy snowfall begins throughout the state as snow fighting forces are increased to a total of 215 plows in anticipation of high intensity snow rate beginning close to 12:00 PM.

1:00 PM: (RI DOT Report) Throughout the entire state, employees and commuting students begin to converge at the heart of the City of Providence metropolitan area (I-95, I-195, Rt-10 and Rte. 146 Civic Center Interchange), while snow fall continues at the rate of 2.0" to 3.0" per hour.

1:12 PM: Providence Police were dispatched by Providence Communications to a reported traffic accident at North Main Street and Pleasant Street This was the first incident police responded to related to problems that were occurring with school bus transportation. Police were dispatched to a total of 15 incidents by Providence Communications over the next several hours related to school busses.

2:13 PM: First Student district manager sends e-mail message to PSD Director of Operations that numerous travel problems were reported by drivers.

2:26 PM: First Student indicates to PSD that all buses were running late from 60 to 90 minutes

2:30 PM: PSD reports that Principals had reported back to PSD Operations that a number of buses had not arrived to pick up their students. Data reflected that 50% of the buses had yet to arrive to pick up students

3:00 PM: Time at which PSD Director of Operations at Westminster Street reports that he realized first signs of grid lock and buses not moving

4:30 PM: (RI DOT Report) Two major incidents begin to unfold within the metropolitan area, which caused major traffic disruptions by 5:00 PM.

Interstate 95 North, Exit 18 – Tractor Trailer becomes disabled in the center travel lanes, blocking these lanes and reducing this segment to two travel lanes

Interstate 195 East, Exit 5 – about eight vehicles are not able to climb the slight grade just east of Exit 5, blocking the two low speed lanes, reducing this segment to one travel lane

4:30 PM to 5:00 PM: PSD Director of Operations advises he has spoken with DPW and police regarding road conditions. PPD Lt. Lepre contacted to arrange transport of stranded Springfield School student. In conversation with Lt. Lepre, PSD Director of Operations learns of extent of delays in travel due to road conditions

5:00 PM: (RI DOT Report) The two highway incidents have now increased congestion along I-95 in both directions. RI DOT snow operation forces have very limited ability to operate within the Providence Metro area

5:20 PM: PSD Operations received information from six principals (King, Kennedy, Bailey, Sackett, Windmill, and Kizirian), and report that a total of 7 buses had yet to arrive at their schools for pick up. They also reported that students remained at Messer and Vartan Gregorian elementary Schools and Greene Middle School. All other buses were enroute to take students home.

At this time PSD requested that First Student report the buses as they returned to the bus yard so that we could have a sense of how many buses remained on the road yard.

5:51PM: PSD inquires as to the number of students at the bus yard (Ricom Way) for parent pick-up. First Student reports that there are 16 students.

6:20 PM: PSD Deputy Superintendent of Operations emails Superintendent, PSD Director of Communications and Parent Engagement, PSD Director of Operations, PSD Chief Academic Officer, PSD Chief Financial Officer, Executive Director of Middle Level Education Initiatives, and Executive Director of Elementary School Initiatives. Email gives details on several buses that are having problems or have not arrived at pick up locations.

7:15 to 7:20 PM: District Supervisor of First Student reported to PSD Operations that 60 – 70 buses were still on the road and had not returned to the yard. This was a rough estimate. At this time it was unknown how many children were on any of these buses.

7:25 PM: PSD Director of Communication and Parent Engagement called Superintendent to alert him that the media was inquiring about the buses and wanted PSD on the air to inform the public. Decision was made to go on air and get bus yard number out.

Approximately 7:30 PM: PSD Superintendent speaks with Director of Communication and Parent Engagement via telephone, this was his first indication that there may be a problem.

7:30 PM: Director of Communication and Parent Engagement called PSD Deputy Superintendent for Operations to confirm the total number of students and buses impacted. Deputy Superintendent for Operations reported that in addition to the

students waiting at the schools to be picked up, there were still 60 – 75 buses out on the roads, with an undetermined number of students on them.

7:30 to 8:00 PM: PSD Director of Communication and Parent Engagement call Superintendent. PSD Director of Communication and Parent Engagement also calls Deputy Superintendent for Operations to get more definitive information. Director of Communication and Parent Engagement fielded from Ch.6, 12 and ProJo, and granted telephone interview to Ch. 6, reporting 60 buses and unknown number of students still out. She gave bus yard phone number to call.

7:45 to 8:00 PM: Superintendent and PSD Deputy Superintendent for Operations are in communication in an attempt to determine the number of buses on the road.

8:30 PM: Mayor's Chief of Staff called PPD Chief during this time period for information and consultation.

8:30 PM: PPD Chief calls Superintendent from his vehicle while on patrol regarding the bus situation and offers assistance.

8:30 PM: At the direction of Colonel Esserman, Providence Police begin mobilization of forces. Officers directed to respond to First Student and Department of Public Works. Subsequently, Command Center activated at Providence Police Headquarters to coordinate activities involved in locating and securing students stranded on school buses.

8:51 PM: PSD Director of Operations calls District Supervisor (First Student), and advises that police have offered to meet buses and take students home. District Supervisor (First Student) advises PSD Director of Operations of an update that there are 43 buses still on the road.

Shortly after 9:00 PM: Providence Police arrive at bus yard and arrange transportation of students stranded at bus yard and on buses remaining on roads. A coordinated effort resulted in numerous officers responding to various locations throughout the city and assisting students stranded on buses.

10:18PM: District Supervisor (First Student) reports to PSD Director of Operations that there are 9 buses still on the road and that the police were continuing to assist.

11:20 pm: Transportation of all students were completed.