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Meals on Wheels drivers in Denver area forge ahead during snowstorm

Posted: 12/02/2011 01:00:00 AM MST
Updated: 12/02/2011 03:13:57 AM MST

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The Denver Post



Meals on Wheels volunteer Kristen Reming delivers a "blizzard basket" Thursday to Jimmie Foshee, 79, at his apartment in Denver. The frozen meals are meant to be stored in a freezer for days when regular meals cannot be delivered. (RJ Sangosti, The Denver Post)

Unless it's a massive blizzard, snow doesn't stop people in Colorado from going about their business. And when there are glitches, there's always the backup plan.

"One of our volunteers got stuck getting out her driveway, so I took over the Aurora route," said Dale Elliott, director of nutrition services at Volunteers of America's Meals on Wheels program, who had just returned from driving the van — very slowly — over snowy roads Thursday.

Each day, VOA delivers 2,800 meals to homebound seniors, whose average age is 86.

Dale Benson, retired after 30 years with the Postal Service, started as a driver for Meals on Wheels two weeks ago. Snowy streets are no obstacle.

"At the post office, not going out is not an option," he said. "You get used to it. You just go slow and hope for the best."

As a strong storm with high winds and snow swept through the southwestern U.S., it left winter white throughout Colorado, including 5 inches of snow in Aurora, 3.3 inches in Denver and 10 inches in Nederland.

Of course, there was the inevitable slow traffic. It took Nolan Doesken, state climatologist at Colorado State University, more than 2 1/2 hours to drive from Fort Collins to DIA, twice the usual time.

And a few places — including Castle Rock Senior Center and JK Mullen High School — closed for the day.

But in general, people just forged ahead.

People still sat on benches waiting for buses.

Some even rode their bikes.

No one seemed especially grumpy or laid low by the winter blues.

That's probably the result of relatively blissful November weather.

After a big snow the night of Nov. 1, there was a nine-day stretch where temperatures were colder than usual, "but the remainder of the month was warm," said Doesken, "except for one quick-hitting cold front."

No prolonged bouts of shoveling sidewalks or slipping on ice.

"We ended up with 12 days in November where the high for the day was at least 60, and five of them were in the last eight days of the month," he said.

The weather on Thanksgiving was as good as that in Southern California.

But don't look for that to last.

In metro Denver, more snow is expected late tonight through Saturday morning, with chilly temperatures.

The coldest months in Colorado winters are December, January and February.

Workers at Meals on Wheels are prepared for that, having already delivered "blizzard baskets" to people to store in their freezers so they can have a hot meal on days when deliveries can't be made.

Of course, no plan is perfect. The women tend to save the food for when it's needed, but the men usually have other ideas.

"The older guys eat their meals the first week they get them," said Jim White, spokesman for Volunteers of America. "They say, 'Corned beef! Wow!' "

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