

Highlands

By Karen Story



and is safe to use indoors. If you don't have a chafing dish, you can put a can of Sterno in the bottom of a pot (on the stove), put a metal rack over the top and put your pot of soup or water on top of the rack.

What were the problems?

Generators are great, but they need fuel, which was hard to get. In addition, they develop fuel varnish if you don't take care of them, and they are noisy. Wood stoves are a great source of heat, but you need to store dry wood and make sure your chimney is clean. The wood smoke also caused air quality problems.

Many people had problems with cell phone reception and connectivity. Some people with Comcast phone service lost all phone service, even to corded phones.

Some people reported feeling isolated and alone. It was hard to get good radio information about what was happening in our local area. Without power, we couldn't get to our phone lists or use e-mail for information sharing.

Master plan

We all agreed that we would like to have a master plan for the Highlands for emergencies. We'll discuss this more at our May 17 meeting. Meanwhile, we came up with a list of things to think about. Please let me know if you have input about any of these.

How can we make sure that elderly and disabled neighbors are OK? Should we have an emergency phone tree of some kind? A list of who in the neighborhood has first aid or emergency training? Where are the closest shelters? Which facilities have generators?

Many people want first aid and emergency training, but can't commit to lengthy courses, such as CERT. Can we find a way to offer shorter training sessions?

How can we communicate with each other if we have no e-mail or phone service?

We need a central meeting point, where people can come to find out what is happening and where we can post written information.

Resources

The city of Seattle and King County both have excellent emergency planning sites at www.cityof-seattle.net/emergency_mgt and www.3days3ways.org. The three ways to be prepared are: make a plan, make a kit and get training.

Rare opportunity

Mark your calendars now, and don't miss the March 15 Highlands meeting. The Kirkland City Council will come to our meeting and spend the entire evening talking to Highlands residents. If you haven't already received them, be watching for a letter and postcard to arrive in your mailbox telling you about the meeting and asking for advance questions (this will give the council time to research answers before the meeting).

Snow photos on Web

The day of the big snow storm I went to Spinney Park and watched people of all ages sledding, snowboarding, building snow forts and throwing snowballs. It was a gorgeous, sunny day and a joyous scene.

I received about 20 photos from neighbors who were there that day. They are posted at www.KirklandHighlands.org; click on the "Snow Photos" link. I guarantee they

Antonia Willnow, 9, pulls 4-year-old Sophia Isaksen down a hill at Spinney Park in January.

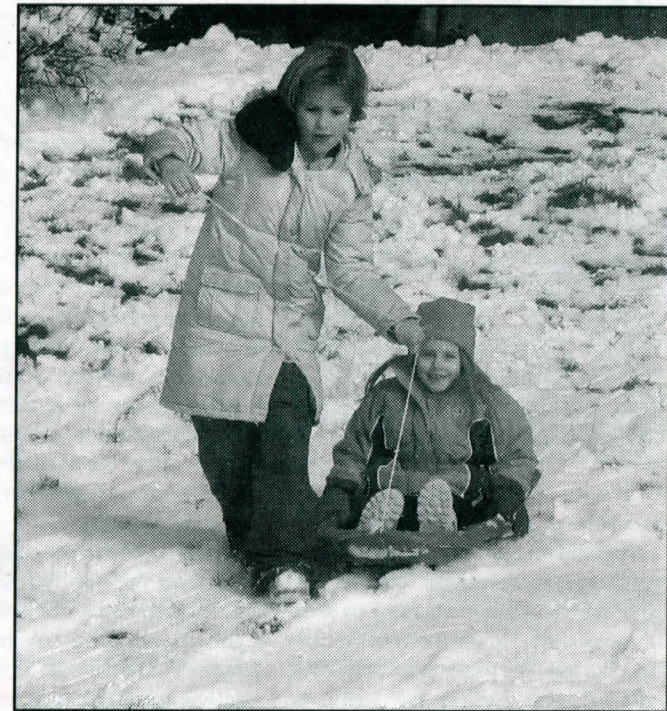


Photo by Tania Busch Isaksen

Air gun ban being considered

Last October some Highlands kids and their teammates were jogging through the woods at Crestwoods Park during their soccer practice when several junior high kids with air guns began shooting at them. Approximately six players were hit with pellets in their upper bodies and necks.

Some of these kids and their parents attended a Kirkland City Council meeting on Jan. 16, requesting that air guns be banned in public spaces in Kirkland. The parents thought it would be a great opportunity for the boys to see our government in action, especially when it involves and impacts them.

According to Highlands resident Hae Sue Park, whose son was one of the boys hit with pellets, "Several of the council members spoke up with complete, resounding affirmation on the ban of these [so-called] toys." The council has not yet made

Congratulations

Congratulations to Highlands resident (and Highlands Neighborhood Association chair) Bob Kamuda, who has been elected chair of the Kirkland Parks Board. This volunteer board advises the Kirkland Parks Department. They will be extremely busy this year helping to plan several new parks and develop master plans.

112th Avenue sidewalk status

Last month I mentioned that the street crew plans to complete the 112th Avenue N.E. sidewalk before the end of February, weather permitting. Please keep your fingers crossed that the project will be done by the end of this month, but if not, look for an update in the March Courier...

E-mail list

Want to know more about what's going on in your neighborhood? Sign up for our e-mail list at www.kirklandhighlands.org.

Are we prepared?

I don't believe in obsessing about possible emergencies — there's no point in going through life being fearful. But what's the best way to stop worrying? Be prepared! At our Highlands meeting in January we discussed emergency preparedness in our neighborhood: How did we do during the December power outage? What could we do better next time? And what worked?

Those who had wood or gas stoves for heat, gas stoves for cooking, or generators, fared better than those who didn't. Light sources that worked well for people included fluorescent lanterns, old-fashioned oil lamps (tons of light, burn for many hours on a cup of fuel) and candles in glass cups (they are safer, and don't tip over).

The "forever flashlight" was another favorite. It never needs bulbs or batteries — you shake it for 15 seconds and it shines for about 20 minutes. They're available at www.foreverflashlights.com. They also sell a lantern/radio that runs on batteries or crank power, and has a jack for charging cell phones.

Remember Sterno? It's handy to keep on hand for warming up food,