

Snow causes issues for maintenance crew  
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Emory & Henry received so much snow in the past two weeks that the college closed three days and had several two-hour delays. During this time, facilities has battled the snow and ice in an effort to keep students safe.

The grounds crew pretreats the ground for potential snowfall with salt but usually cannot do much until they see how much snow really does come down. After the snow accumulates, facilities has to plow and shovel, then repeat the process as needed, sometimes three or four times.

“With the past snow you would start at one end of the sidewalk and when you’re ready to turn and come back and it was covered again. That’s how fast the snow was coming down; it was hard to keep up with it,” Custodial Manager Laura Pruitt said.

Maintenance Manager Terry McGuire estimated that facilities plowed on and off for 48 hours; some employees even had to spend the night because of the difficulty traveling home and back again to campus.

“I think we’d love to be able for you guys [students] to walk on the clean, dry sidewalk all the time, but it’s not possible. With as [many] sidewalks as we have, we do the best we can,” McGuire said.

Facilities workers start with the interior campus and residence halls to ensure that all students are safe. Everyone in the plant pitches in to help with snow, which creates backlogs in all three departments: maintenance, housekeeping and grounds.

“Unfortunately our regular routine gets thrown out the window,” McGuire said.

The team, which includes 19 custodians, six grounds workers and eight maintenance workers, work around the clock to take care of about 600,000 square feet, five miles of sidewalks, and three to four miles of roads. Steps are particularly time consuming for the crew as they have to be done by hand.

“We go into what’s known as ‘police mode.’ Our first responsibility is we want to make sure the steps and porches are clean so that nobody falls. Then we go in and pull trash and clean restrooms. Then we keep moving from the next building to the next building so that we can get everything covered,” Pruitt said.

The snow has caused leaks in the King Center, Van Dyke, Martin Brock and Wiley-Jackson. The King Center roof was in particular danger as ice formed around the roof drains, and the water could not leave, resulting in approximately three inches of water sitting on the roof. The leaks on the King Center occurred because of the blocked drains.

Workers were sent home at various points to rest and prepare for more snowfall to keep from getting too tired. In attempts to be most productive, the crews work to incorporate snow upkeep into their regular shifts.