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The Old Union County Courthouse during the storm. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

covering roughly twice the area of Irma.

Nelms was hopeful that all power would be turned back on by Tuesday, Dec. 12.

David Dyer wore three hats during the storm – Union County Emergency Management Agency Director, Union County Fire Chief and Union County E-911 Dispatch Director – and all three operations stayed busy.

Dyer opened the EMA's Emergency Operations Center at Fire Station 1 on Friday, Dec. 8, after the National Weather Service announced that Union County could expect up to 11 inches of snow.

The EOC stayed open most of the weekend, coordinating with other first responder agencies and handling informational calls for 911 dispatch, which also kept busy throughout the winter storm event.

Hundreds of trees fell through the county, according to Dyer, which made work steady for the road department and EMC.

"We had a structure fire Friday night (off Flat Rock Gap Road) that was a total loss," said Chief Dyer, adding that no one was hurt in the fire. "The road department cleared the

road all the way to their little secondary road, so we had a good response, it's just that was hard to do in nine inches of snow when it's already 50 percent involved."

Union County Schools were closed on Friday, Dec. 8, and remained closed on Monday, Dec. 11, due to continued poor road conditions, unresolved power outages and more, according to Union County Schools Superintendent Dr. Fred Rayfield.

Both city and county government buildings and offices closed on Friday, and a number of events scheduled for the Dec. 8 weekend were canceled, including the Vogel State Park Tree Lighting, Holly Jolly Christmas by the Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce, and the Blairsville Police Department's Shop with a Cop was pushed back a week.

U.S. Highway 129 South shut down Friday because of the difficult driving conditions, and dozens of motorists found themselves stranded on the mountain for several hours that day. The mountain road opened back up the afternoon of Saturday, Dec. 9.

Low area temperatures throughout the weekend all

but guaranteed the presence of black ice Saturday and Sunday mornings, and while much of the snow melted on Sunday, still more remained heading into Monday.

Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris updated his constituents regularly with photos and information via Facebook, as did Union County first responder agencies over the weekend.

The American Red Cross teamed up with Union County EMA to open a temporary emergency shelter in the House of Prayer Family Life Center on Saturday, Dec. 9, and while not many people took advantage of the facility, it was available to anyone who needed it.

Deputies with the Union County Sheriff's Office maintained a strong presence on the slick roads during the winter event, making medical checks and helping with the dozens of accidents that occurred due to the snowy weather.

"We had a lot of people out – thank goodness we've got a lot of four-wheel drive units in the sheriff's office now," said Union County Sheriff Mack Mason.



Union County's White Christmas came early this year, on Friday, Dec. 8. Pictured here, Georgia 515 from the Blairsville Overpass. Photo/Shawn Jarrard



Photo/ Frank Uhle