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we knew everything that fell was going to be there right then, so we were afraid that if it came in earlier than they were forecasting, that it'd be tough getting people home."

Paying careful attention to different forecasts around the area, and having conversations with a number of surrounding school system superintendents and the sheriff's office, as well as waking up around 4:30 a.m. and checking road conditions, all play a large part in deciding whether or not to call off school.

Steppe remembers a time two years ago when forecasters predicted snow for around 1 p.m. The snow had other plans, however, and arrived early at 9 a.m., causing the school system to have to scramble to get students home.

Snow that fell in the first storm of last week Tuesday night into Wednesday caused precipitation that stuck around into Thursday morning, and many back roads in the northern parts of the county still had snow and ice to contend with.

As for Friday, Steppe and everyone else in the county were processing growing data pointing to a big, bad storm moving in, with the potential to dump upwards of a foot of snow in areas of the mountains, not to mention wind gusts of up to 45 mph and freezing rain expected before noon.

Gov. Nathan Deal declared a second state of



Roscoe Collins Drive across from Union County High School was completely covered in snow and ice on Saturday morning after wintry weather that started the day before

emergency for Union and 20 other surrounding counties that Thursday, Jan. 21, which was to last through Sunday, Jan. 24.

And for much of Friday morning and into the afternoon, the temperatures hovered in the mid to low 30s before dipping dramatically into the 20s, where the temperature would stay until Sunday afternoon.

As for makeup days,

the students have yet to miss enough school to worry about those.

"It's too early to decide that right now," said Steppe, noting that inclement weather is one of the reasons the schools wait until the springtime to schedule graduation. "What we're working on right now is what we called the teachers in today (Thursday) to work on,

inclement weather packets, where they have assignments for such days that the kids can take home with them and keep at home.

"And when we have inclement weather, the teacher can say, we'll just go ahead and work on those packets, and we'll turn that in and talk about it the next day back at school, which will help students keep up with their studies."

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every community stakeholder was present for at least one of the severe weather meetings.

The first winter weather advisory last week called for freezing rain and ice accumulations early morning Wednesday. The second winter weather advisory called for more dramatic weather fluctuations.

The National Weather Service predicted flooding, thunderstorms, freezing rain, snow up to 8 inches and beyond in certain areas of the mountains, and even the possibility of tornadoes in some parts of the state, all over the course of early Friday into Saturday.

What started as rain early Friday transitioned to snow in the evening that lasted through Saturday morning, and temperatures dropped to the low 20s and would remain there until Sunday afternoon.

Blairsville City Councilwoman Martha Cone attended one of the EMA meetings to judge whether or not to cancel the daycare program she's affiliated with out of First United Methodist Church.

Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris went to each meeting, trying to get a grasp on the ever-changing scenarios that could have led to a major weather event or a minor one in Union County.

While counties like Rabun and Towns took a pounding early from snow, Union County seemed to be spared the worst, getting only a couple of the possible 8 or more inches predicted.

Gusty winds and icy patches beneath the snow proved hazardous Friday night through Sunday morning, as temperatures stayed in the 20s until Sunday afternoon, and again Sunday evening into Monday morning, as temperatures dipped back below freezing.

Fortunately, the county Road Department remained ever vigilant in its pursuit of clear and safe roads, running eight vehicles with a special salt and gravel mixture throughout most of the weekend, even overnights.

Speaking on behalf of Union County EMA, Chief Dyer said that the main role of EMA is to, first and foremost, inform the public of what's going on, to respond to any emergency that presents itself, and to prepare for those emergencies.

"Our biggest thing is preparation, and educating

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forward for Steppe's time as chairman of the Mountain Education Charter High School Board.

The agreement was for 1 percent of the Mountain Education Center's yearly administrative costs, which haven't yet been determined, but that money will eventually go into the Union County School System's general fund.

Will Stafford, band director at Union County High School, asked the board to buy his band four tubas.

After searching online for tubas, Stafford discovered four of the instruments being sold by the University of Notre Dame.

The board approved the purchase of the tubas – which had only been used for one year – for a total of \$12,000, or \$3,000 apiece.

This was a good deal, according to Stafford, as the same tubas new would cost more than \$7,000 each.



Union County first responders gather for an EMA meeting during last week's winter weather state of emergency

the folks to know how to take care of themselves, but also to prepare the county and our resources to be able to respond to anything that might come about," said Chief Dyer. "Emergency management, it's really about the whole entire community.

"Volunteer groups, church groups, the school system – everybody from a citizen to every organization in the county is working together to help get through any kind of emergency that we might have. That's really the EMA's goal, to coordinate and organize that effort."

Stressing preparation, Chief Dyer said that emergency management is an ongoing, continual process, during which information is disseminated as it becomes available, and emergency situations are mitigated as they arise.

"When it comes to a weather event, or any event, that's when it comes to the

point of, we have to respond," said Chief Dyer. "Responding is where we stop all of our preparations and plans, and we start putting those plans into place, and start actually using those plans.

"It involves the whole entire community of being able to sustain yourself at home, plus we're responding if there's an emergency."

Chief Dyer said that a good preparedness resource for residents looking to learn how to sustain themselves at home is www.ready.gov, or even the Union County Fire Department's Facebook page at Union County Fire/Rescue & EMA.

"The biggest thing we want people to do is, if you don't have to go anywhere, get your materials to stay at home for a couple of days and stay at home," said Chief Dyer. "Don't go out unless you absolutely have to."