



News Release

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Ecology's Washington Conservation Corps deployed to Spokane

SPOKANE—Washington Department of Ecology's Washington Conservation Corps (WCC) crews from around the state are arriving in Spokane today to remove heavy snow from the roofs of two school district buildings. Some crew members are being deployed to the Department of Ecology's (Ecology) Spokane office to help shovel the snow off the roof there. For safety reasons, Ecology employees were sent home Monday for two days while the work is being done.

The WCC crews are beginning to remove snow from the roof at Riverside High School and Medical Lake's high school and middle school. School district officials called Ecology's WCC when the snow began to pile up and it was clearly more than the school building employees could handle alone.

Crews are arriving from Wenatchee, Yakima, Ellensburg, and it's possible that more will be brought in from other areas of the state.

According to Kenji Toelken, who manages the WCC Spokane crew, the WCC last year removed "a whopping 500 tons" of snow off the roofs of Riverside School District alone. He anticipates greater quantities and greater weight this year.

Ecology administers the WCC program to give young people hands-on experience in the environmental field. Statewide, the WCC has 135 members ranging in age from 18 to 25. They build trails, restore fish and wildlife habitat, help to monitor the environment, and receive valuable training along the way. They also respond to emergencies.

The WCC crews began helping out after the city of Spokane and Spokane County both declared a state of emergency in December.

In the past few weeks the Spokane crew helped about 100 stranded citizens through the "211" help line that comes in to Spokane County's emergency management center. They've helped clear the way for people to get to their doctors. They've helped to make sure that care givers and food providers have clear access to homes of the elderly and people with disabilities.

"These kids put out an amazing effort, every day," Toelken said. "This is hard, but very rewarding work for them."

For more information about the WCC, go to:
<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/sea/wcc/index.html> .

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For more information:

On WCC: <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/sea/wcc/index.html>

Ecology's Web site: <http://www.ecy.wa.gov>

Broadcast version

The Department of Ecology's Washington Conservation Corps has been called in from around the state to help shovel the heavy snow off the roofs of the Riverside and Medical Lake school districts. They will also help to shovel Ecology's own roof in Spokane.

The W-C-C is comprised of 135 youths, aged 18 to 25 who sign on for hands-on experience in the environmental field and in emergency response.

In addition to roof work, the Spokane-area WCC has helped about 100 people get out of their homes for medical care and helped care givers and food delivery services gain access to homes to help the elderly and people with disabilities.