

Orcas Highlands News – Addendum January 2009

LET IT SNOW: Those of us who winter in the Highlands just completed the first storm of the winter and, most of us hope, the last. The snow fell hard and stayed longer than it needed to. Because of the length and the severity of the storm, many of our residents left their cars by the mailboxes.

VANDALISM AT THE MAILBOXES: During the storm, on or about December 20, vandalism occurred at the mailbox parking area. The following information was provided by the San Juan County Sheriff's office:

- At least six mailboxes were emptied of their contents. The mail was placed in a box and each piece was slit open and checked for contents. Most of the contents were returned to their envelopes---but not all. The box of mail was transported to the intersection of Horseshoe Highway and Eagle Ridge Road, where it was left. On December 29, when the snow had begun to melt, a nearby homeowner found the box and looked inside. When mail was discovered, the County Sheriff was called. On December 31, a deputy delivered the very soggy, identified mail to those addresses that could be deciphered on the envelopes.
- Thieves attempted to hotwire a Honda Element parked in the mailbox area with no success. However, they hotwired another vehicle parked there and drove it to Eastsound where it was abandoned. Approximately a week later, the vehicle was reported to the Sheriff who traced ownership to a Highlands resident. It has been returned.

The Board hopes this vandalism is an isolated incident. If you park your car at the mailboxes, be sure no valuables are visible and that the vehicle is locked. With regard to the mailboxes, the Board is reviewing several ideas and considering calling a meeting of interested homeowners. If you would like to be included, please contact Judy Cook at 5028.

PLOWING: Several Highlands homeowners were dissatisfied with the plowing that occurred during the storm, particularly those who lived higher up on Discovery Way. Our usual plowing service canceled and, because of the holidays, securing a replacement plow was extremely difficult. The County is not responsible for our roads, so plowing must be arranged with local, available contractors. We are aware that Buck Mountain raised its dues substantially a year ago, in part to better cover plowing costs. That association bills the residents directly if the plowing budget is exceeded. The Board is open to that solution if that is the will of the community. Other options that will allow for more timely snow removal are also being explored. The Board would like to remind all residents that in metropolitan areas that have sophisticated snow removal systems, homeowners are required to shovel their sidewalks as well as their driveways. This includes snow left in the driveways by snow removal equipment. Always be prepared for heavy snow in the Highlands. Keep a snow shovel on hand and, if you don't have an appropriate 4WD vehicle, plan to ride-share with a neighbor that has.