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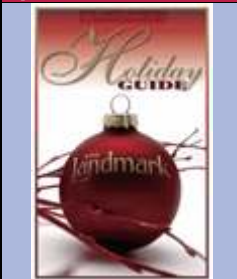
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News

- Front Page
- Holden News
- Paxton News
- Princeton News
- Sterling News
- Rutland News
- Regional News
- Editorials & Opinions
- Letters
- Sports & Recreation
- Schools
- Obituaries
- Fire & Police

Special Sections



Storm Roundup

ENERGIZED: Town officials reported Monday that about 98 percent of the town's primary wire would be up and running by the end of the day; that means about 95 percent of the town's more than 7,000 customers would be up and running as well. But still, it leaves about 200 customers still in the dark and cold since Dec. 11; that's 11 days. "Too darn long," Town and Light Department Manager Brian Bullock said. The volume of calls to the light department has naturally decreased, but Bullock said the intensity has increased as those without power for 11 days called to express their dismay in emotional terms. The residents are often those who need individual service to their homes, where power lines were detached. The light department is continuing to service those customers where possible. Repairs continue, with between 17 and 30 crews from all over the state — and the country — in Holden at any given time. Residents who know their neighbors have power while they do not may require an electrician to help re-establish power to their homes (see SCAMS, below). Call the Light Department at 508-829-0276 to report any problems, and be patient — the lines remain busy.



DON'T BE ALARMED: Worn out crews at the Holden Municipal Light Department requested police presence to help deal with traffic, parking and long lines of sometimes fractious residents at headquarters earlier this week. Assistant Light Department Manager Jacquie

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Poll

What is the best holiday movie?

"It's a Wonderful Life"

BEETLE BRUSH: Residents who want the USDA crews to collect brush and trees from their property as opposed to from the curb, may file a permission slip, available from the light department near the corner of Holden Street and Shrewsbury Street. Officials noted, however, that the slip also includes a box to be checked that would allow the USDA to take down host trees; though it's unlikely that crews that are under the gun to remove brush before a snowstorm — or before exasperated residents remove it themselves and possibly dispose of it in an unregulated area — will be spending the extra time to take down other possible host trees if they haven't already fallen down. Better safe than sorry, however. Check the USDA web site for cleanup info at: http://www.aphis.usda.gov/newsroom/hot_issues/alb/alb.shtml. Town officials emphasize that residents should pile brush on their properties, away from sidewalks and roadways where it can impede snow-clearing efforts.

SCAMS: Officials have warned daily that they continue to hear reports of scams by contractors charging seemingly exorbitant fees for services desperately needed by folks wishing to restore power to their homes and clear yards and driveways. Town Manager Brian Bullock told an assembly of town officials that he'd heard estimates of \$1,500 for what many agreed is, at most, a \$500 or \$600 job to reattach an electrical box pulled off a home by falling wires and trees. Officials advise residents to get several estimates. Growth Management Director Dennis Lipka's office will review estimates for residents who need help. Police have been called on several occasions, and have warned out-of-town contractors in some cases. Contractors — like residents themselves — are on edge and in some cases, have given police cause to arrest: a fistfight between two contractors mid-week brought police to the scene and resulted in an arrest for operating under the influence.

GIVE 'EM SHELTER: Holden's warming center at the Senior Center closed over the weekend after those remaining there were transferred to different care facilities or as their homes became energized and they were able to return to them. WRHS will remain open for folks to shower and for crews to get a warm meal due to the continuing shelter need and the high number of



Presented by Dr. Marcia Southwell Dean, Audiologist


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There are many options available today to help hearing impaired individuals of all ages live happier, more fulfilled lives. If you'd like to find out more about cochlear implants, contact us at **AUDIOLOGY ASSOCIATES OF WORCESTER, INC.** If you have a hearing instrument you are not happy with, bring it to us and we'll be happy to check it out and discuss other hearing aid options with you. Your complete satisfaction is our ultimate goal here at 130 Lincoln Street, so all new hearing instrument sales come with a no risk trial period. Conveniently located off I-90, with plenty of off-street parking, you can reach us at 508-792-8263.

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the continuing shelter need and the high number of crew members and public safety personnel working overtime to restore the town to normalcy.

TRASHED: Trash pickup resumed its normal schedule this week, and residents got a little Christmas present; due to the high volume of spoiled food from loss of power, trash trucks are picking up extra trash outside the toter without requiring the blue Town of Holden trash bag. The town's trash contractor is also offering a special rate on dumpsters for storm cleanup. Casella can be reached at 508-248-0010 and 888-532-2735.

NO CRIME SPREE: Though police spent a good deal of time checking out contractors and solicitors who swarmed to the affected area, Holden Police Chief George Sherrill said only two incidences of burglary can be traced to the storm: one at the Mobil Station in the center of town at the beginning of the storm, and another in a private home on Salisbury Street over the weekend. Sherrill said that break-in resembles those that have been happening in Worcester, where thieves target homes that appear to be abandoned during power outages. In this instance, the home, while dark, had power — and inhabitants. Thieves broke in through the garage door and were scared off before taking anything obvious; an investigation is ongoing into possible theft of smaller items. No descriptions of the perpetrators or vehicles is aiding them, except footprints in the snow. Sherrill said he expected more thefts during the state of emergency but is grateful that his staff didn't have to spend time tracking down generator thieves.

E-mail storm news, stories and photos to mmckeon@holdenlandmark.com.