P ublic Safety and snow: A horrendous combination

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In life there are rules, and breaking a rule can bring about consequences. In the public realm, rules are referred to as laws and breaking the law, and getting caught doing so, sets into action a chain of events that eventually leads to punishment. To be execrated for breaking the law requires a type of pardon from a high-ranking official, and that rarely happens in the public realm, as exceptions are rarely, if ever, made. Nor-tially, this is an agreeable rule. Exceptions are rarely, if ever, made. Normally, this is an agreeable rule. There is, however, one suggestion that the rule book ought to be tossed out the window, and early last week was one of those times.

As a refresher for those blocking last Monday night, Feb. 5, out of their minds: it snowed, a lot. 12-24 inches of snow was dumped on our loveable region, and it came down fast. In less than two hours, Holy Cross was blanketed in snow. This is a big deal, mind you. If your snow comes down faster than Holy Cross can remove it, the storm must be a blizzard, as (seemingly) half the city of Worcester comes to shovel our paths and roads for us. Snow falling at a fast rate can cause some serious problems for automobiles, including the 5:00am dump on Dartmouth Street, not to mention the hogs hails from the south of the Mason-Dixon line. Two students had bad experiences with their automobiles during the early part of last week, which is understandable. What is not understandable, or acceptable, is how Public Safety dealt with these issues. In the toilowr two stories, the names have been changed to protect the innocent, though the stories themselves are true.

Case #1 - The Steep Hill Conundrum

Jane Doe lives in Loyola. On that Monday, the snow had just begun to fall, and Jane decided to make a trip to the Worcester Common Outlets in the late morning. Upon returning to campus, she parked her car near her dorm with the intention of moving it to its evening parking spot later in the day.

Later in the day arrived, and Jane showed up to park in the student lots. Unfortunately, at Holy Cross, steep inclines are abundant, and Jane’s car simply would not make it up the wet and slippery hill. This is understandable, as the snow had been dumping on Worcester for hours, and snow removal was plodding along at an alarmingly slow rate. After multiple futile attempts to get up the hill, Jane found herself near the Fitch Field parking lot. She settled on parking her car there for the time being, as the car clearly wasn’t making it up Mount St. James on this stormy night. She figured she would call Public Safety, let them know about the problem, they would say something to the effect of “oh, no problem it’s a dismal night, and probably safer for you to just let it be until the morning,” just make sure you move it as early as possible for the faculty to park there.”

No such luck.

Public Safety would not hear of it. “A car parked in a faculty lot overnight? Come on, people have been tortured and hanged for less...”

Apparantly, Public Safety is not a group of human beings, but a massive machine incapable of compassion or reason.

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This story does not cast a good light on Public Safety. Public Safety, as an organization, could have easily ignored two cars essentially stuck in inappropriate parking lots during a time in which any driving was unsafe. Case #1 is particularly disturbing, as it happened as far as to say “we can’t help you.” Public Safety’s first priority ought to be helping those members of this community, and obviously, they failed in this situation. They failed in case #2 as well. If Public Safety were to serve this community, it never would have forced a student to move a potentially deadly vehicle. College officials must be somewhere where directed in order for snow removal to operate at its highest level of efficiency. They have a point, but one or two stray cars in a very harsh storm is not going to hinder the entire snow removal plan of the college.

Public Safety has a very unaccomicating attitude with regard to parking, and cars in general. This is ok, on a general basis, Public Safety must enforce all rules to the fullest extent, in order to maintain some order on this automobile–crowded campus. However, Public Safety’s hardnased attitude turned into hard-heartedness last week, and that is unacceptable. It could be chalked up to the cold–hearted nature of an establishment. If the same incidents were happening in Boston during a storm, the BPD would have little choice but to enforce the laws, as there are far too many officers to control, and far too much land to cover, in order for one car to be protected from towing or ticketing. The same does not hold true for the 175-acre campus of Holy Cross, nor for its “under–staffed” Public Safety Office, which has quite a manageable amount of officers on duty at any given time. It would have been simple to alert the officers on duty to leave a car alone, as it was stuck amid a dangerous winter storm. Instead, Public Safety’s gesture was a remarkable act of helplessness. Public Safety must occasionally examine the circumstances in which they ask for a parking reprieve. Every once in a while, believe it or not, the students may be right.