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# ‘Bomb Cyclone’ Makes Landfall on Seattle U Campus

Liam Lawless, Staff Reporter

In the frightening spirit of the last week of October, violent gusts of wind swept through the Seattle University campus, making their mark along the way. Students may have seen the Official Communications statement released on Nov. 5 detailing the damage done to one of Campion Hall’s windows Oct. 24. The adverse weather event, dubbed a “bomb cyclone,” was part of a larger storm that berated the entire West Coast with gales and floods.

Hilary Lichterman, director of Housing and Residence Life (HRL), recounted the series of events.

“Like many, I definitely heard the high winds and the howling outside the weekend that [the bomb cyclone] happened, and I was pleased that my colleagues in Facilities were able to identify right away that we had a broken window in Campion,” Lichterman said. “Fortunately, there were no injuries--that was our first priority. We took immediate steps to block off surrounding areas.”

Despite occurring in the largest residence hall on campus, this incident appears to have minimally affected students. A Residence Assistant (RA) who prefers to remain anonymous described their own peripheral ties to the event in an email to The Spectator.

“I am not too sure what caused the window to break, but I do know it was from a vacant room,” they said.

The Seattle U campus was especially vulnerable to the storm because bomb cyclones are not a typical weather phenomenon.

“We didn’t anticipate the nature of the weather that was coming,” Lichterman said. “In my short four months here, we’ve had rain and wind, but nothing of this magnitude.”

Facilities Associate Vice President Robert Schwartz, who issued the Official Communications statement, has been at the forefront of the issue. Not knowing what to expect from the weather, there were no special precautions that could have been taken in anticipation of the cyclone’s arrival or effects.

“We didn’t do anything like you would for a hurricane--we didn’t board up windows or anything like that,” Schwartz said.

Schwartz and the rest of Facilities quickly responded to the incident, and have started to uncover what exactly happened.

“We’ve already done some initial inspections. The windowpane actually got sucked out of the window,” Schwartz explained. “We have ideas as to why the window failed, but we aren’t 100% confident. We’re not aware of any additional issues at this time.”



Adeline Ong

Facilities employed the expertise of 4EA Building Science, a building enclosure consultant that Seattle U previously contracted to work on the newly constructed Sinegal Center for Science and Innovation (CSI), to aid in their own response efforts.

“We hired them for the CSI, and all they do is look at your building envelope to ensure that you’ve addressed wind, rain and snow to make sure the outside stays outside and the inside stays inside,” Schwartz said.

Moving forward, Seattle U Facilities plans on collaborating with 4EA to analyze any potential sources of error that caused the Campion window to detach from the building and fall down to the roof of the residence hall’s ballroom.

“We’re going to pull apart a window tomorrow, actually,” Schwartz said. “They’re going to take measurements, look at our installation methods, do some engineering calculations and assess the adequacy of the existing installations to try to figure out [the reason for window failure]. Once we figure out the fix, we have to figure out how to implement it.”

Given the unique nature of this incident, it remains a priority for Seattle U administrators.

“[The incident] has received attention at the highest levels of the university. As noted in our [Official Communications] comment, the safety of our students is our highest priority, so we’re going to do what it takes to protect that,” Schwartz confirmed.

If any students are concerned about this incident, there are several resources on campus to ease anxieties.

“We never want students to be negatively impacted by work that’s going on, or to have any inconvenience or fear about what is happening,” Lichterman said. “We want to demystify that, and know that our students see [Campion and other residence halls] as their home while they’re here at school. My hope is that, if students have questions or feel any level of concern, they know all the good ways to reach out in addition to the Housing office, like the wonderful RAs, the Department of Public Safety and the [Campion] front desk.”

Students can access these resources in a number of ways. Anyone living in Campion or other residence halls can contact their RAs directly, while Public Safety, Housing and Residence Life and Facilities are able to be contacted via phone, email or in person.