

Winter Storm After-Action Report (AAR) Template

Event Name: Winter Storm Fern (RIC Storm 26-03)

Report Date: 02/11/2026

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1. Executive Summary

- **Overview of Event** - An arctic cold front crossed the area during the night of 1/23/26 and into the morning of 1/24/26. Temperatures dropped into the teens with dew points between 0 and -15F by morning of the 24th. Subtropical moisture became established and overran the arctic airmass that was in place from Texas to the mid-Atlantic. Light to occasionally moderate snow began during the evening of the 24th. Warmer air aloft changed the precipitation to sleet by the morning of the 25th. With very cold surface temperatures snow and sleet immediately accumulated on ground surfaces. Precipitation continued through the day on the 25th. A weak low-pressure system formed off the North Carolina coast and tracked NNE just off the Virginia coast. Precipitation turned to liquid rain/freezing rain during the evening hours on the 25th. Historical data from DTN Weather Sentry indicates freezing rain reported through the 11pm hour on the 25th, ending around midnight. The National Weather Service reported total snowfall for Richmond between 3.5 and 4 inches, with sleet accumulations 1-3 inches and ice accretions no higher than .25 inch. Skies during the early morning hours of the 26th were cloudy to mostly cloudy, with temperatures remaining in the mid-20s F.
- **Summary of key impacts** – the National Weather Service issued a Winter Storm Warning for the region, with predictions of downed trees and widespread power outages across the Richmond Metro. Governor Spanberger declared a State of Emergency in advance of the storm. All flights except for two early morning departures on the 25th cancelled. Aircraft for Delta and American Airlines remained parked at RIC gates during the storm.
- **High-level findings and major recommendations** – Recommendation for contractor to remove snow & ice in air carrier leaseholds/parking areas when tenants have not arranged for services, with costs to be back charged to leaseholders.

2. Incident Overview

- **Event Timeline:** Storm onset January 25th (early morning hours), major precipitation end January 25th (11PM), storm recovery period start January 26th
- **Weather Conditions:** Total snowfall accumulation 2.5 – 3.5”, sleet 1-3”, and ice accretions .25-.50” (source National Weather Service).
- **Affected Areas:** Mid-Atlantic Region including Metro Richmond and Henrico County.
- **Emergency Declarations:** State of Emergency declared by Virginia Governor Spanberger.

3. Response Objectives

- Primary goals during the storm – airside and landside snow and ice control, life safety, infrastructure protection, continuity of services, maintain operational readiness for aviation activity.
- Agencies and organizations involved in the response – Capital Region Airport Commission

4. Operational Summary

- **Emergency Operations Center (EOC) Activation:** N/A
- **Resource Deployment:** Full deployment of Richmond International Airport Snow Team personnel, and equipment in support of snow and ice control efforts.
- **Public Communication:**
 - National Weather Service issuance of a Winter Storm Warning
 - State of Virginia, Governor's declaration of a State of Emergency
 - RIC PIO winter weather advisory news release issued January 21st
 - RIC social media winter weather advisories
 - RIC tenant & stakeholder winter storm advisories
- **Sheltering & Mass Care:** N/A
- **Critical Infrastructure:** N/A

5. Observations & Analysis

- **Observation:** Freezing rain compounded operational challenges from snow and sleet accumulations for air carriers (passenger and cargo) that did not execute a snow and ice control plan in leaseholds and aircraft parking areas.
- **Analysis:** Ineffective snow & ice control measures by a number of RIC tenants.
- **Impact:** Cancelled/delayed flight operations.
- **Best Practices:** Monitor forecast weather predictions and plan for snow and ice control measures.
- **Areas for Improvement:** Coordination of snow & ice control efforts between the airport and RIC air carriers, and other aircraft operators.

6. Lessons Learned

- While the RIC SICP puts the responsibility for snow & ice control in leased areas on the tenant, RIC management acknowledges that severe winter storms may require the Commission to bring in a snow removal contractor to supplement Snow Team efforts.
- Review current airfield Priority 1 routes to ensure access to aircraft parking ramps on the east side of the airfield, and Taxiway Romeo to the north FBO complex, and FSDO.

- Communication remains a vital part of any emergency operations. RIC Airport Operations, the maintenance division, and Snow & Ice Control team will continue to critique communication and comms strategies to ensure maximum effectiveness.

7. Improvement Plan

Issue	Corrective Action	Responsible Party	Timeline	Status
Snow/Ice accumulations in leased areas	Engage a badged snow removal contractor to assist tenants on a case-by-case basis	CRAC	Immediately	Complete

8. Appendices

- Photos from winter storm.
- Historical weather data from 1/25/26.
- SICC post-event meeting minutes from 2/10/26.
- NOTAMs - FICONS