

Public Works Prepared For Snow

It's early December and Orland Park has already had its first snowfall, much the same as last year. Then again, let's hope that it is not the same as last year because the village had nineteen events in December of 2007 alone.

There has been much talk and press coverage about the lack of salt and the exceedingly high prices some communities are being forced to pay for road salt. The Orland Park Board of Trustees has approved entering into a contract with the State of Illinois, Central Management Services for the purchase of road salt for the 2008/09 Fiscal Year. Even though the price is 33% higher than the previous year's cost, the village has secured enough tonnage to ensure that all streets will be properly maintained.

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE?

The Village of Orland Park Public Works Department is responsible for clearing snow from many of the streets within the village. However, the Public Works Department does not have jurisdiction or responsibility for Illinois Department of Transportation, Cook County or Orland Township roads within the village.

SNOW EVENTS

When is it best to either plow or salt? When does Public Works start to plow? How are the gears set in motion for each event? These are all good questions but there is not one simple answer. Each snow event has many different variables, the amount of snow; duration of the storm; time of the day, i.e. whether it is during the rush hour or not; (Remember that the plow driver is stuck in traffic too.), wet snow or dry snow; temperature; (salt loses its efficiency as the temperature drops below 20 degrees F.), drifting; snow with very little moisture content and high winds will cause severe drifting and streets will need to be plowed several times to keep them open for traffic and last but certainly not least is "black ice."

The Village of Orland Park is divided into 24 specific routes not including cul-de-sacs of which there are approximately 500. Typically, the highest priority is given to the roads that carry the highest volume of traffic. However, depending on the severity of the event, all roads may begin being cleared at the same time including cul-de-sacs. It is the intention of the Public Works Department to have all roads cleared and salted within eight hours after the snow has ended.

HOW DOES IT START?

The Public Works Department has a national weather radar tracking system whereby storm movements are continuously monitored. The size and intensity of a particular storm are also assessed as it gets closer to our area. In addition, police officers on routine patrol notify their dispatcher of any hazardous conditions and they in turn call the Public Works supervisor who is on call.

Storm fighters are given prior notice, as far ahead as reasonably possible, of an impending storm. This is done to allow drivers time to get enough rest before they have to report to work. (Most of our snow-fighting efforts are done overnight

or in the early morning hours). All trucks are loaded with salt prior to any event. The snow fighters are split into two teams, "A" and "B," to provide continual coverage throughout any given event.

Cul-de-sacs are cleared by independent snow fighters under the supervision of the Public Works Department. Each independent driver is assigned about 30 cul-de-sacs and it takes normally about 20 minutes to clear a cul-de-sac depending of the amount of snow that has fallen.

SALT STORAGE CAPABILITIES

Each year, the Village of Orland Park enters into a contract with the State of Illinois through its Central Management Services Department to procure road salt. This year, Orland Park has contracted for 6,000 tons of salt of which we are obligated to purchase 70% or 4,200 tons.

The Public Works Department Salt Storage Facility, which has received an award for the last six years as an outstanding storage facility and for sensible salting, is capable of storing in excess of 3,500 tons of salt at one time. The 2007/08 season had an unusually high number of events, 53, which was more than twice the number in previous years. Typically, the Village of Orland Park has about 25 events and uses about 4,200 tons of salt per season. Last year, the village used almost 9,000 tons in those 53 events, making it through without having to pay any exorbitant prices.

TRAVELING DURING THE WINTER SEASON

Winter travel, whether locally or great distances, can be very hazardous and extreme caution must be taken at all times. The golden rule for travelers should be to "drive for conditions". Normal snowfall for this area of the country is approximately 38 inches and is usually spread over approximately 23 events. Last year, the village experienced 60 inches of snowfall and the Public Works Department had 53 snow crew call-outs.

The Orland Park Public Works Department is ready to handle whatever Mother Nature throws at us but it takes time and cooperation from everyone to accomplish our goals in an efficient manner. Three things that residents can do to help village snow removal operations include the following:

- Do not park on village streets during a snow event. Parking is prohibited on village streets once two inches of snow have fallen.
- Do not clear your driveway until the driver has made the curb pass.
- Do not snow blow or shovel your driveway snow onto the street. Putting snow onto the grass areas will avoid creating a hazard in the roadway when snow becomes slick and icy.

Any questions or concerns can be directed to the Village of Orland Park Public Works Department at 708/403-6350.

