

When the snow flies, be a good neighbor

Unforeseen surprises during a snow event happen all the time.

Preparation and friendship between competitors are keys to uninterrupted service.

by JOHN ALLIN / The Allin Companies

Friendly competition is one sure way to get help when the unexpected and unforeseen events occur during any given snow event.

You never know when you will need to suddenly avoid a car pulling out in front of you, and you end up in a snow bank. Or, you find that you tried to stack that last "push" a little to high, and got the front end of your plow truck hung up in a snow bank. That is when it pays to have kept your competition on friendly terms. They are the people who are out at 3 a.m. doing what you are doing: trying to stay ahead of the storm. They can rescue you from hours

of "digging out" when stuck. If you are honest and fair in your dealings with the competition, then they should not mind "helping out" when the need arises, just as you should not mind helping them out.

I have even gone so far as to have one of our crews plow a competitor's account when I knew that he had a major breakdown. An unexpected breakdown can cause major problems for the small plowing operation. And while that operator may never have the opportunity to plow one of our accounts to help us out, he might just stop to lend a hand if one of our trucks is stuck.

Most plowing contractors carry at least some spare parts in the cab of their truck. But it seems that no matter what parts you carry, the problems that arise usually require the one part you don't have in the tool box. It can be quite inconvenient when you lose a plow pin and are miles away from the shop, and it is snowing like the dickens. Friendly competitors can loan or sell these type of parts to each other in a pinch. I tell our guys to help out this way when the need arises.

If you don't get to know the guys in the other plow trucks across the street, you can be left scrambling to get your accounts done on time, or worse. It can be very difficult to find a supplier open—and/or nearby—during the middle of the night. And most of us are usually cutting it close during a storm. We want to plow the customers as close to their opening time as possible, so that they are getting the best service possible. Customers get a bit testy

Ten guidelines for snow fighters

- 1 Report for work physically and mentally fit, and properly clothed for any emergency in order to withstand the rigors of the task.
- 2 Never enter the cab without inspecting the lights.
- 3 Know your spreading and plowing routes, as well as the performance of the spinner and the life of the plow blade.
- 4 Be alert in order to avoid guardrails, headers, stalled cars, manhole covers, railroad tracks and mailboxes.
- 5 Stay calm on the job, even though cars and trucks pass on both sides and tailgate too close for comfort. Anger only multiplies the prospects of coming to grief by accident.
- 6 Use your radio as briefly as possible, if you have one. Remember fellow workers may need to communicate in an emergency.
- 7 Shutdown the flow of power to the spreader before attempting to free foreign objects or blockages, if you treasure your fingers.
- 8 Take the truck and spreader out of gear and set the emergency brakes before dismounting from the cab.
- 9 Gauge your vehicle speed according to the conditions, or else you may wind up with your truck upside-down.
- 10 Mind your manners on the roadway; clearly signal your intentions; render assistance to stranded motorists; and remember that it is more blessed to give than to receive.



when they arrive to a snow filled lot, instead of a neatly plowed and accessible parking area. Your own liability problems can get sticky if the lot is not open on time.

Prepare for the unexpected surprises, and talk to your competitors, and you won't miss a beat when the snow falls!

—John Allin is the owner of The Allin Companies, Erie, Pa. The organization uses more than 75 units to plow, move and stack snow. The Erie area regularly receives annual snowfall in excess of 250 inches.

New snow and ice management assn. needs members

The Snow & Ice Management Association opened for business in June with headquarters in Erie, Pa.

The main goal of SIMA is to encourage the participation and affiliation of people who are in the snow and ice management business, whether they are contractors or property and facility managers.

The SIMA is a not-for-profit corporation. Its goals over the next few years include establishing a member newsletter and magazine, and providing information on purchasing, networking, training, general business, subcontracting, safety, legislation and customer management.

For more information on SIMA, phone (814) 456-9550 or write SIMA, 1903 West 8th St., Suite 150, Erie, PA 16505.

The right way to salt

"Sensible Salting," as defined by the Salt Institute, of Alexandria, Va.,

includes the following:

- personnel training;
- good equipment;
- calibration of spreaders;
- use of automatic controls;
- adequate, covered storage;
- proper maintenance around storage

areas;

—attention to environmental concerns.

Only use the amount of salt you need to get the job done, advises the institute. Early application to roads will prevent snow and ice from bonding to the road surface.

Apply salt in a windrow or full width. The institute advises that the application be no wider than the truck that is spreading it. Brine formed from salt and water will run to other parts of the road and will be spread by traffic.

If you've ever wondered how long it takes the salt to start working, the institute estimates it takes 20 to 30 minutes.

Storage

Outside stockpiles should be properly shaped, in either windrows or conical shapes, piled on impermeable pads and covered. Proper drainage will keep the salt dry and protect the surrounding area.

Temporary covers can include:

- tarpaulin;
- polyethylene;
- polyurethane;
- polypropylene;
- rubberized polyethylene.

Types of under roof storage areas:

- shed;
- pole-type;
- quonset;
- barn-type.
- dome-type;

The Salt Institute has made available literature on salt for snow and ice control. For more information, contact the institute at 206 North Fairfax St., Fairfax Plaza, Suite 600, Alexandria, Va. 22314; (703) 549-4648.