

FALL & WINTER 2009/2010

As the Fall and Winter seasons approach, the Homer Township Road District is preparing for a major change in our daily activities. We have just a few more drainage issues to resolve and perhaps one more time around the block with our street sweeper. We will not have enough time to address all of the patching that is needed in our storm sewers but it will not have an effect on their capacity nor their ability to function. We can return to those in the spring of 2010. Our 2009 paving program is complete and the federally funded project on 151st Street should be completed in early October.

Once the leaves begin to fall, we'll have to cease operating the street sweeper. It is not designed to pick up leaves and clogs up when we try. We are now in the process of trimming those trees that would prevent us from plowing the snow to the edge of the road. The growing season has ended and we are no longer mowing the rights-of-way in the open areas. Our branch pick up program will end on Monday, November 2nd.

This year we are adding a new plow route driver and new truck to keep up with the new subdivisions that we have taken on these past few years. Our goal is to add another for the 2010/2011 season to shorten our cleanup time after the snow events. We have a new salt dome engineered for our facility that should triple our storage capacity. This will maintain our levels of salt even when seasonal shortages develop. It will also allow us to take advantage of lower salt prices when they become available. It should be built in the summer of 2010.

We will have an entire winter season to utilize our ant-icing equipment this year. Hopefully this will enable us to lower our salt use and still maintain safe roads. It will be used primarily on our arterial roads and bridges. Last winter's measurable snow for nine consecutive days was one string of events that resulted in an above average use of salt for the season. This is not only costly but also bad for the concrete and metal structures in our roads and the environment.

The following is information on a few items that can help residents understand our procedures and policies that we employ at the Road District:

TREES

The Road District trims trees for two main reasons; safety and access.

We maintain the ten thousand trees that are located in the 140 miles of road right-of-way we serve with a crew of four men, three or four days a week, seven months a year. We are not able to notify residents prior to trimming vegetation in their neighborhood. Doing so would have a profound negative affect on our ability to maintain the safety of our road ways. It is important to know that we are not landscapers and therefore we never trim trees just for esthetic reasons alone. When vegetation of any kind restricts the sightlines for traffic and or regulatory signs such as stop signs and speed limit signs, we trim it as needed. We also trim vegetation when it encroaches on roadways or sidewalks and interferes with their use. We need to plow every road right to the edge and hanging branches will restrict sight lines, damage safety lights and mirrors and have also broken the windshields on our plow trucks. We need a clear and unfettered

access to every roadway. It should also be noted that we only trim vegetation in the road right-of-way and never on private property.

We take every effort to respect our community and the natural resources we have. Our foreman that manages that department has been with the Road District for over twenty-five years and understands the respect our community has for nature. The entire department has been instructed by the villages' Certified Arborist, Roger Ross on the proper ways to prune trees to maintain their health. Still, not every resident will be satisfied with the policies and practices that we employ when trimming vegetation. If there is a tree in the road right-of-way in front of your house that you would not want us to address, you should maintain it so that the Road District would never have to trim it. We never trim trees unless they are a hazard to the equipment that serves our community or the residents who live here and drive on our roads. One of our policies is to trim as few trees as possible and only those that pose a problem to our community.

LEAVES

The burning of leaves anywhere in the road-right-of way is strictly prohibited and those who do may be fined as much as \$750.00.

INSERT LEAVE BURN ORDINANCE HERE

The Village of Homer Glen has restrictions on the burning of leaves on private property and residents are encouraged to contact the village prior to the burning of yard waste. Nu-Way, the refuse contractor for Homer Glen does offer a yard waste service that will pick up leaves. They can be contacted at 708-479-9555 for further information. Those living in the unincorporated areas will have to call their private waste hauler.

SNOW PLOWING

We have only one crew and therefore only one good shot at effectively addressing any single winter weather event. There are twelve drivers that should not work any more than twelve consecutive hours plowing snow. Plowing snow can be extremely tedious and that has a tendency to encourage fatigue. A fatigued driver is not a safe driver. We are constantly monitoring our crews during weather events to insure the safety of our community and our staff. Most major snow events last 8 to 12 hours, some last longer. When you consider that it takes 5 hours to completely go through a plow route once the snow stops, you begin to see that most weather events require many man hours to address.

Just when it is best to initiate a snow plow effort is not an exact science. It is at best, a judgment call based on weather forecasting (temperature, amounts and duration) and the time of day the event begins. We have a service that provides a calendar of the predicted snow event showing precipitation amounts, temperatures and wind speeds on an hourly basis. Once the storm is mapped out on paper, we take our twelve hour window and apply it the map where we would be most effective. Non-storm events that influence our start times are daylight hours, rush hours and school bus schedules. While this is all good in theory, the amount of our success is determined by the accuracy of the forecast.

There are many things to consider before we call out the crews to address a winter weather event. The number one question we ask is:

CAN WE IMPROVE THE CONDITION OF THE ROAD?

There are times during heavy snow conditions when the road is much the same just behind the plow truck as it is just in front of the plow truck. If we're unable to substantially improve the road conditions for a considerable amount of time, we're just wasting our time.

MAILBOXES

Most every one of the more than 8,000 residents in our community has a mailbox on the edge of the road. If we do not plow the road close enough to your mailbox, you will not get a mail delivery because the letter carrier can not access it. If we should plow too close to your mailbox, you will not get a mail delivery because it will probably be laying in your front yard. Last year both the Road District and the Village of Homer Glen adopted a similar ordinance in respect to the replacement of mailboxes knocked down by snow plows. The ordinance is as follows:

Insert ordinance here!

We will not be responsible for those mailboxes that are either in a weak or distressed condition. It is the responsibility of the resident to maintain their mailboxes with enough integrity to sustain our normal snowplowing activity. As per the ordinance, we will either replace the

mailbox with a standard wooden post and metal box or reimburse the resident with \$125.00, whichever they choose.

We can not replace brick mailboxes other than as noted above. The Homer Township Road District can not, in any way, participate in the construction of a brick structure along the edge of any roadway.

WINTER PARKING

The Village of Homer Glen is strictly enforcing the no-parking ordinance for two or more inches of snow. It is important to keep vehicles off the streets until they have been cleared of snow. Parked cars will be ticketed by the Will County Sheriff's Office.

We do not plow snow by "appointment". Therefore, if there is a vehicle in front of your house when we plow, we'll have to plow around it. Calling the road district when it is moved and expecting us to return to clear the snow is not practical when there is 8,000 residents and 12 drivers.

PLOWING SNOW ONTO THE ROADWAY

Residents should be aware that if they plow, shovel or snow-blow snow onto the street, they may be held liable for any accident that it may cause. Those who do not believe that they may be liable should call their home owners insurance provider and pose the question to them.