

Trustees' Chairman Praises Effective Work by the Road Department

Sylvania Township's fire and police services are often recognized for their public service, but this winter has shown a light on another essential department, our road department. This department is responsible to make our streets passable in the brutal winter. Crews have been working shifts of 12-hours-on and 12-hours-off for most of the last six to seven weeks. As pointed out by Greg Huffman, public works manager, when those shifts end most of the operators go home and have to shovel their own driveways and sidewalks, they eat, unwind, sleep and then come back in to take another 12-hour shift. This becomes very difficult, very quickly. It is a testament to the entire department that through this difficult period there has been perfect attendance, even with the high numbers of cold and flu cases reported in our area.

The township's snow-removal equipment has also been put to a rigorous test this season and it too has come through admirably. Although the township's fleet over the past few years has been downsized, the equipment generally has been upgraded and is newer. Between storms, the garage has been busy maintaining the equipment and replacing parts as needed. Mr. Huffman pointed out that in addition to the public attention to reduced levels of road salt in the area, plow parts are also becoming scarce.

The township currently has about 300 tons of salt on hand and is waiting for an additional 700 tons from a few different sources. Although that's a lot of salt, township crews have so far spread 2,500 tons of salt on the 130 miles of township streets. Last snow season the township only purchased 1,300 tons of salt and the year prior, only 800 tons of road salt was purchased.

One of the most difficult areas in the township this year has been the Sylvania-Metamora Road corridor. The high winds and massive drifting in this area has been a consistent concern over the past weeks. In addition to the plows working diligently, the township has sent in front-end loaders to remove snow from some of the cul de sacs along that route. Cul de sacs are very difficult to maintain and require extra time for plow drivers.

Mr. Huffman has been public works manager for Sylvania Township since 1989 and has experience with the city of Sylvania and the Ohio Department of Transportation. In all those years he said this is "absolutely" the most trying snow season in his experience. He added that it is eased somewhat by the work ethic of his crews as well as coordinated efforts with Lucas County and ODOT, which are responsible for snow removal on their routes as they go through the township. Our drivers are trained with a special course in the handling of snow removal equipment presented by ODOT. It is reflected in the safe operation of these vehicles in very difficult conditions. There have been fewer than 10 complaints about damaged mailboxes and that is a testament to skill of the operators.

In this stubbornly difficult season, Sylvania Township has tried to keep up with Mother Nature, only to know we are at her mercy. It takes everyone's cooperation and understanding during these trying days. As snow amounts continue to pile up, there is less and less space to put the snow. This can easily create a hazard to our residents. One of the concerns is private snow plow operators pushing snow from private drives and commercial parking lots into the public streets. The township has already sent 12 to 14 letters to private owners warning them that such a practice is illegal and hazardous to others. The township isn't looking to make things difficult, but our first responsibility is the safety of our residents and maintaining a clear public right-of-way.

The forecast does not seem to indicate a change in weather patterns anytime soon and the clock continues to tick and so do the expenses. There has been almost \$40,000 in overtime pay since the snow began in December, and other expenses will likely have to be met based on the unusual stress of this snow season. Trustees will reassess the budget of the road department in the future. For now it is appropriate to acknowledge with thanks the diligence and ability of the road department in what may be a snow season for the record books. We all need to take a little extra time in getting where we are going and keep on thinking about Spring!!



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