

# MEMORANDUM



**TO:** JEFFREY HERCZEG, DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS  
**FROM:** MATT WIKTOROWSKI, FIELD OPERATIONS MANAGER  
**SUBJECT:** FY 2024-2025 WINTER ROAD MAINTENANCE REVIEW  
**DATE:** MAY 22, 2025

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This memorandum reports on winter maintenance performance data for the 2024/2025 winter season. The data is compared to previous seasons and supported by factors that posed challenges or, conversely, enhanced service, such as abnormal weather and equipment advancements, respectively.

## Background and Winter Road Maintenance Results

Southeast Michigan experienced a mild 2024-2025 winter season, responding to only 21 events at an average temperature of 34 degrees, with approximately 32" of total snow accumulation (the historical five-season average is 23 events, 33 degrees, and 29" of snow). The mild conditions contributed to another effective winter road maintenance season.

The exact total of measurable snow received of 32 inches was like the past five season average of 29 inches. This season, neighborhoods were cleared more often to remove hardpack snow/ice, which is often associated with wet snow and warmer temperatures indicative of the recent winter weather patterns.

The attached table shows data from the past 17 seasons. However, this season's statistics are only compared to the records obtained over the previous five winter seasons. Each of these performance measures is discussed in detail below.

## Citizen Feedback

DPW received a total of 83 concerns from citizens relating to winter maintenance compared to the previous five-year average of 155. Some of this season's concerns are as follows:

- 8 Driveway Plowed In
- 13 Lawn Damage
- 15 Mailbox Hit
- 3 Not Close Enough to Curb
- 4 Not Close Enough to Mailbox
- 13 Road Missed
- 1 Sidewalk Plowed In
- 21 General Concern

The overall lower number of concerns (83) is likely due to reduced lawn damage complaints. Although Novi experienced a mild winter overall, temperatures were cold enough to freeze the ground, so lawns were not significantly affected by plows. Overall, in 2024-2025, the department averaged less than four citizen concerns per event.

### **Traffic Crashes**

The Novi Police Department provided data that officers responded to 59 crashes this past winter, where snow and ice were listed as being on the road surface. Although there is no data to support whether the roadway condition was the sole contributing factor to any accident, tracking roadway condition provides a benchmark for service and safety. Historically, Public Safety crews have responded to an average of 33 events over the past five seasons.

### **Salt Use and Liquids Use**

DPW is continually looking for new ways to reduce the amount of salt used for melting snow and ice from City-maintained roadways and parking lots. Limiting the amount of salt not only saves on operating expenditures but also reduces the number of chlorides entering our watersheds and infrastructure. Over the 2024-2025 winter season, DPW crews applied approximately 4,362 tons of salt, or \$304,159 of material, at an average of 208 tons, or \$13,122 per event, compared to the five-year average of 199 tons per event.

The Department continues to see benefits from the automated brine maker supplying pre-wetting and anti-icing liquids to roadways. Because the equipment can make several thousand gallons of solution each day without oversight it allowed our team to apply materials more effectively. Through the application of liquids before a storm (anti-icing), our team can rest longer and report closer to rush hour to clear roads for motorists. The Department applied 80,168 gallons of liquid, or an average of 3,818 gallons per event. In future seasons, DPW plans to increase the amount of liquids used per event to proactively address slippery conditions and limit environmental impacts from the rock salt use traditionally applied.

Novi's proactive use of anti-icing materials was highlighted in several interviews (Channel 7, CW 50, WJR 760, and The Detroit News) this winter; qualifying the program as a regional leader.

### **Labor Costs**

Labor costs can vary significantly from season to season given the time and frequency of events. If most storms occur in the middle of the night, or on weekends, the labor cost will be high. Conversely, if most storms happen close to a regularly scheduled shift, the cost will be lower because less overtime is needed. The total labor cost for the 2024-2025 season were higher (\$225,126, or \$10,720) per event, compared to overall seasonal averages of \$168,362 and \$7,513 respectively.

## **Conclusion**

Each season DPW evaluates materials, labor, and equipment used in winter road maintenance to enhance operations. In recent years, the Department has added advancements to trucks' cabs to calibrate material dispersion, wing plow attachments to truck chassis, which quickly clears more snow from roadways and AVL services to best track winter maintenance activity allowing teams to estimate completion times. This season, the Novi City Council approved a new salt dome that replaces a structure over 30 years old. This building will allow us to load salt more efficiently and safely through an external conveyor. The dome will also store approximately 33% more material, minimizing the amount of times delivery trucks visit the site. It is estimated that dome construction will be completed in July 2025.

Many of the new ideas, enhanced practices, and leadership development happen through investment in our team. This season several members from the snow and ice team attended the American Public Works International Snow and Ice Conference in Grand Rapids, with the ability to attend 70 educational sessions, and a 40,000 square foot exhibit hall floor. Team members also attended a Local Technical Assistance Program (LTAP) in Bellaire and the Michigan Road Scholar Program (MRSP) in Mt. Pleasant. Through this continued investment in our team, we will grow and further develop as industry leaders.