

PRESS RELEASE PRESS RELEASE

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**Road Commission “Pumpkin Parade” highlights preparation for winter
Flint, Michigan. ---**

The Genesee County Road Commission conducted its annual final inspection of winter maintenance equipment at its Oakley Street headquarters and each of its district garages the week of November 8- 12. Dubbed the “Pumpkin Parade” because for years this final preparation was done at the Oakley Street location and the long line of cleaned and polished orange snow plows and salt trucks entering the facility resembled a parade of pumpkins. But this final inspection is only the most visible of the many activities the Road Commission conducts to ensure its trucks and its troops are ready for anything that the fast approaching winter can dish out. According to Maintenance Director Anthony Branch, “Each piece of equipment in the ‘parade’ has already had any routine maintenance items taken care of, has been through its inspections and should be ready to fight a storm. We go over them one more time to make sure they are all in ‘fighting shape’ and ready to battle the elements. This year we’re expanding the scope of this event to include the buildings, the furnaces, the alarms, everything, at each of the garages.”

While the trucks are being inspected, the drivers are getting updates on any new equipment and procedures, often directly from the manufacturers. “Our equipment operators are seasoned veterans with a lot of winters under their belts. But the

equipment changes as new models with new capabilities come online, and procedures are updated accordingly. And of course it has been 7 months since we've dealt with snow and ice. Winter maintenance - snow and ice removal- is a hostile, dangerous environment, and we want to be sure that our operators and our equipment are as prepared as possible."

The GCRC typically puts 70 snowplows/salt trucks on the road to battle a major winter storm. These drivers can work for up to 14 hours before they must rest, according to GCRC rules. Their effort can then be supplemented by a crew of 9 more drivers if a second shift is required. "We're down 6 drivers from last year, because of retirements, but we're holding our own. We have plenty of salt, the equipment and crews are in fine shape and we should be able to provide the same level of service as we have in the past."

As Manager-Director John Daly points out, just staying even with past years is quite an accomplishment, given the dismal state of road funding in Michigan. "This year is the fifth straight year in which our primary source of operating funds — revenue from the state gas tax and vehicle registration fees — has declined. Those five years of decline follow nearly 10 years of virtually flat revenues. In fact, we'll receive less funding in the current fiscal year than we received in 2000." As a result, GCRC has been making cuts and finding ways to operate more efficiently for years.

Still, Mr. Branch reminds motorists that with a road network the size of Genesee County it does take a while to get to all the roads, especially the subdivisions.

“Obviously our priority in a snowstorm has to be the higher volume roads, the expressways and the county primaries. The main local roads are next. We try to get into all of the subdivisions within a day or so after the storm ends. We just ask folks to understand the magnitude of the job we have and have a little patience.”

For photos and video of the “Pumpkin Parade”, or to get the Road Commission’s winter maintenance policy and a host of tips, tricks, reminders and resources for safely coping with winter weather and winter driving, visit the Road Commission’s website at www.gcrc.org.

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