

PRESS RELEASE PRESS RELEASE

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Warm weather means potholes bustin' out all over

Flint, Michigan. ---

The Genesee County Road Commission is warning motorists that potholes will likely begin to pop up in the next couple of weeks, with temperatures rising into the 50s after having been around zero the past week, then falling again.

“Potholes can appear literally overnight with this type of dramatic swing in temperatures, and gravel roads tend to turn to muck,” said GCRC highway maintenance director Anthony Branch.

“Spring is pothole season in Michigan. Hitting one can be both dangerous and expensive for motorists, and locating them all can be expensive for us. So, when motorists report a pothole, they save us money, and we will fix it fast, saving motorists money.”

Potholes form when water flows into cracks in aging pavement, then freezes and expands, further damaging the pavement. When the ice melts, it creates an unsupported air pocket under the road surface. When cars, and especially heavy trucks, drive over such an area, they cause the road surface to collapse, creating a pothole.

GCRC Manager-Director John Daly expects the pothole problem to worsen in coming years, as roads continue to crack due to aging, with dwindling preventive maintenance money available to seal the roads. “Roads in Michigan have been underfunded to such a large degree for such a long time that there is simply not enough money to resurface all the aging roads that require it.

Without a significant increase in road funding, roads will not get resurfaced and the pothole problem will get worse every spring as the pavement continues to age and crack,” he said.

Last year the Road Commission entered into partnership with CBS Outdoor to place road safety messages on billboards. CBS is reusing the boards the Road Commission designed last year and waiving the lease fee. The billboard asking motorists to 'Report a Pothole' was put back up yesterday on EB I-69 near Bristol Road.



“These billboards allow us to reach a huge audience of motorists in a way we would not be able to otherwise, and seek their help in keeping roads safe.” Said Mr. Daly.

Unless there is a particularly dangerous pothole, patching crews typically do not operate during rush hour, when they would tie up traffic. Because of the danger to patching crews, typically several trucks are involved, with one serving as a "shield" behind the crew, to ensure they aren't be hit by oncoming traffic.

The Road Commission uses a high-performance material to patch potholes. The material can last a year or more, and while it is common to see the patch hold up, the aging pavement around the patch can break up, according to the road commission.

Every year, Road Commission workers hand shovel more than 3.5 million pounds of patching material into potholes. Including labor, material and vehicle usage, the annual pothole repair price tag is more than \$4 million dollars.

Gravel roads are challenging during warm spells at this time of year as well. While the surface

thaws, the road base remains frozen. As water accumulates on the roads from melting snow, it mixes with the dirt and gravel that has thawed in the top layer of the road, forming a soup-like layer of muck, especially in low areas.

There is little the Road Commission can do about this muck. It cannot be pushed off the road, and there isn't enough manpower or material available to fill these areas with new gravel. The Road Commission has jurisdiction over nearly 400 miles of gravel roads.

While GCRC monitors its roads closely, it welcomes calls from the public reporting large potholes or severe gravel road problems. Motorists can report road issues to GCRC by calling (810) 767-4920, sending an email to pothole@gcrc.org or clicking on the “Report a Pothole” icon on its website, www.gcrc.org.

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