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**Government of the District of Columbia**



**DC Department of Public Works**

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Testimony of  
**Christopher J. Shorter**  
Acting Director

**Public Oversight Roundtable on  
District Snow Removal Operations Plan**

Committee on Transportation and the Environment

Councilmember Mary M. Cheh, Chairperson

John A. Wilson Building  
Room 500  
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20004  
Monday, October 26, 2015

**TESTIMONY OF CHRISTOPHER J. SHORTER, ACTING DIRECTOR  
DC DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS  
ON THE DISTRICT SNOW REMOVAL OPERATIONS PLAN**

**BEFORE THE  
COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND THE ENVIRONMENT  
OCTOBER 26, 2015 AT 11AM**

**Introduction**

Good morning, Chairperson Cheh, members of the Committee on Transportation and the Environment, and members of the Council. I am Christopher Shorter, Acting Director of the Department of Public Works and I will provide testimony regarding the District's snow preparedness and operations planning efforts. I am joined today by Robert Marsili, Citywide Program Manager for Snow Operations.

I would like to take a moment to thank you and the members of the Committee on Transportation and the Environment for the opportunity to testify on behalf of the DC Snow Team this morning. Directors Dormsjo, Weaver and staff within the Departments of Public Works, Transportation and General Services have been working tirelessly to ensure we have the personnel, equipment, and resources we need to ensure the District is prepared for the 2015-2016 winter season. I would also like to thank the Mayor and City Administrator for their continued support and leadership. Their ongoing and direct involvement and guidance throughout the planning and preparedness process have played an especially important role in ensuring we have the people and equipment needed to appropriately respond this winter season.

The primary mission of the DC Snow Team is to:

- Keep our primary, secondary and residential roads safe for vehicular traffic.
- Expedite the return of normal traffic flow, and

- Resume delayed or suspended government services and business commerce in an efficient and safe manner.

## **Lessons Learned**

As you may know, at the end of each snow season the DC Snow Team conducts an after action review with key members of the operations team and support agencies to review what went well, what went as expected and what needs to be evaluated for improvement in the snow program.

Our operations plan reflects months of evaluating the previous year's performance, analyzing options that may result in improved performance during the upcoming snow season, and making final decisions about personnel deployment, equipment and other purchases, and overall system wide management.

To that end, we are conducting monthly meetings with regional partners in anticipation of the 2015-16 snow season, including Metropolitan Area Transportation Coordination (MATOC) Program, which includes the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), the Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA) and local surrounding counties.

This year's Snow Program will also feature:

- 14 new heavy plow trucks for larger streets and six new light plows for smaller, residential streets;
- 15 additional rental plows;
- 2,000 tons of salt held in reserve above the city's 39,000-ton capacity;
- Road Weather Information System (RWIS) to track air and weather pavement conditions;
- Regional Integrated Transportation Information System (RITIS) to assist with regional traffic monitoring and real-time incident reporting that may affect traffic.

We also conduct hours of classroom and road course training for drivers and other personnel. That training culminates with the annual “Dry Run,” which was conducted last Friday, October 23<sup>rd</sup>. All personnel involved in the District’s snow response participated in this final dress rehearsal in preparation for the winter season.

### **Important Fact and Figures**

The DC Snow Team consists of over 800 personnel. The majority of whom are employed by DPW, DDOT, DGS and are supported by DC Water and the Department of Corrections.

The expanded snow team includes the Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency, the Metropolitan Police Department, and the Office of the State Superintendent of Education Division of Student Transportation.

The 800 personnel involved in the District’s snow response:

- Drive heavy and light plows.
- Load salt into salt spreaders.
- Spray brine to help prevent ice from forming on roadways.
- Track the plows when they are deployed.
- Shovel snow from sidewalks on bridges.
- Perform quality control and safety duties.
- Maintain and fuel the trucks and other equipment.
- Monitor the traffic cameras.
- Ensure communications equipment is functioning properly, and coordinate our response to service requests.

Other personnel ensure time and attendance are recorded, contracts are in place and facilities are maintained.

The team is responsible for clearing snow and ice from 1,100 miles of roadways and 241 bridges, including the 75-mile National Highway System (NHS), which is maintained through a contract with Capital Paving.

## **Snow Operations and Deployment**

The snow plan divides the District into 14 geographical zones for snow and ice removal operations, coordination, and command control purposes. These 14 zones have been further divided into 71 primary and secondary road routes and 82 residential routes. Snow captains are assigned to each zone. The primary responsibility of the zone captain is to ensure all routes within their respective zone are cleared of snow and ice.

During a snow event, we deploy 6- and 10-wheel dump trucks with plows and salt spreaders along these routes. We call them heavy plows. Our light plows are deployed along the 82 residential routes, which are smaller streets. When the heavy plows finish their routes, we re-deploy them to support the light plows working on the residential routes.

The District has 544 pieces of equipment that can be used during a snow/ice storm. That number includes heavy and light plows.

The District has three basic mobilization plans for winter events that may range in severity from a dusting to a full-blown blizzard:

- **FULL DEPLOYMENT- (Snow Coverage ½-6")**  
143 Heavy Plows, 82 Light Plows, 45 NHS Plows, and No Contract Plows are used
- **FULL DEPLOYMENT (Above 6")**  
Additional 75 Plows + 20 additional NHS, possible use of 50 pieces of specialized equipment, e.g., Bobcats, if conditions warrant

- **PARTIAL DEPLOYMENT**  
(Dusting) - 51 Heavy Plows, 42 Light Plows, 15 NHS Plows
- **PROWL DEPLOYMENT**  
(Bridges and Overpasses) - 42 Heavy Plows are used

The variables that determine the level of deployment are based on the following forecasted factors:

1. Temperature (Air and Roadway) - Above/Below 32 degrees
2. Type of Precipitation - Snow/Sleet/Freezing Rain/Ice
3. Estimated Duration of Precipitation
4. Wind Conditions
5. Time of Day - AM/PM Rush Hour, Midnight, etc.
6. Day of Week - Weekdays vs Weekend

Additional factors we consider when responding to snow events are service delivery and safety for the residents, businesses, commuters and visitors of the District of Columbia.

It is also important to keep in mind that in the midst of a changing weather forecast, the lead time needed to modify the mobilization plan decreases drastically when scaling up versus scaling down.

DPW utilizes 80 temporary CDL drivers from the Leaf Collection Program to fill vacant CDL driver slots in our current deployment plans. All driver positions were filled before October 23, 2015.

### **What We Need Residents and Others to Do**

District of Columbia residents, visitors and business owners play a very important role in our response to a snow event.

Knowing the weather forecast is the starting point for government, individuals, families and businesses to successfully plan what they need to do before, during and after a snow storm.

Motorists should pay close attention to announcements regarding snow emergencies. When a snow emergency is declared, that means significant snow is expected and we need to be able to clear the streets curb-to-curb. We remind motorists that a \$250 fine is imposed for parking on a snow emergency route when a snow emergency is in effect and violators will also be charged a tow fee of \$100 and an impoundment storage fee of \$20 per day.

We are also asking property owners – residential and commercial – to commit to clearing their sidewalks within 24 hours after a storm ends. Walking is the primary means of transportation for our children making their way to school, and many adults prefer walking to work and other activities rather than driving.

Again this snow season, Serve DC is mobilizing a volunteer effort to shovel snow for residents who are unable to do so. Serve DC's goal is to register over 500 volunteers to assist throughout the snow season.

Residents should visit our web site to get information to help plan for snow. There are checklists from the DC Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to guide your planning for winter.

You also will find safety tips for pedestrians, motorists and cyclists.

The site also explains what happens when a snow emergency is declared and lists the snow emergency routes where parking is prohibited.

When a snow storm is underway, go to *[snow.dc.gov](http://snow.dc.gov)* to see where the plows are working.

I want to again thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of the DC Snow Team. This concludes my testimony. I am happy to respond to your questions.