Idea EXCHANGE

Between the storms — Tasks for no-snow days

Sidewalk grinding

Culvert maintenance

WHEN THE BIG SNOWS blow in, plow drivers are plenty busy, but it doesn't snow all the time — not even Up North. During these quiet periods crews can tackle a variety of other projects. This Idea Exchange lists some projects that staff can start between snowstorms, then set aside to do plowing.

What others are on your list?
Write or e-mail your ideas by November 1st and we will include them in the Winter issue.

- ☐ Remove brush and trees
- ☐ Maintain buildings — cleaning, painting
- ☐ Grind uneven sidewalks
- ☐ Inspect and clean storm sewers
- ☐ Repair fences
- ☐ Stockpile materials like gravel
- ☐ Maintain off-season vehicles; e.g. rebuild lawn mowers
- ☐ Fill pavement cracks— weather permitting
- ☐ Inventory signs and replace as needed
- ☐ Update road inventory — do condition ratings when pavements are clear
- ☐ Inspect culverts — rainy fall weather is ideal
- ☐ Select new equipment — have users help evaluate, test, and set up
- ☐ Train staff — safety and other
- ☐ Arrange cross training in your shop and with other departments
- ☐ Work on projects for other departments — parks, water, sewer — in exchange for their staff plowing snow

Maintain off-season vehicles

New diesel fuel is in the pipeline

Most existing diesel engines should be able to burn ULSD fuel without modifications.

ULTRA LOW Sulfur Diesel (ULSD), the new fuel to help reduce particulate emissions from diesel-powered engines, is now being produced and distributed. Under a federal EPA requirement, refiners and importers have one year from June 1, 2006, to ensure that ULSD averages 80% of the on-road diesel fuel they sell. Production start-up is slow, but by early 2007 most refiners are expected to produce only ULSD.

The target date for retail outlets to begin selling ULSD is October 15, 2006. They are not required to offer the new fuel, but those with just one diesel tank will likely sell it exclusively. Older types of on-road diesel fuel should be gone from the marketplace by late 2010.

Most existing diesel engines should be able to burn the ULSD without modifications. At first, equipment owners may want or need to replace fuel filters sooner than normal. Since ULSD can act as a solvent, filters may clog with sediment from fuel tanks. However this problem has not been documented as a common occurrence, according to the US-EPA Web site. A few engines built before 1993 may need different seals in engines and fuel systems.

Beginning with 2007 models, all new on-road diesel equipment will require ULSD. These vehicles will have advanced emission control devices that could be damaged by higher sulfur diesel. Running them on older fuel types may also invalidate the manufacturer's warranty.

The new diesel fuel has lower lubricity, meaning it does not adequately lubricate fuel injection system parts. To compensate, suppliers will add lubricating agents before delivery. They should follow an ASTM lubricity standard.

Biodiesel from soybeans or corn, in amounts of up to 2% of the volume, can supply lubricity. It has the added benefit of being a lower-polluting, local and renewable fuel. Owners may be concerned about the effects of biodiesel on their equipment, but engine manufacturers say that using up to 5% biodiesel "should not adversely impact operability" if ASTM standards are followed. However, some fleet operators have been using blends of 20% biodiesel since early 2005 with no problems. (See story on page 3.)

Signs and paperwork

Central refueling facility dispensers must have labels with the sulfur content of the diesel fuel being dispensed. The requirement took effect June 1, 2006. As ULSD reaches retailers on or after October 15, they also are required to label their dispensers. If the type of fuel in the tank is switched, the signs must be changed too.

There are different labels for highway and non-highway diesel fuels, with "Low Sulfur" or "Ultra Low Sulfur" labels for each. Labels must meet US EPA specifications for wording, visibility, size, etc. Correct labels may be downloaded from the American Petroleum Institute Web site (see next page).