

Snow equipment training pays off

Summer and fall are prime times for scheduling snow equipment training days.



A regiment of tubular markers awaits deployment in the Lambeau Field parking lot at the annual APWA equipment training event.

SUMMER AND FALL are prime times for scheduling snow equipment training days. Operators and maintenance staff members in many highway and streets departments across Wisconsin are participating in refresher courses, and learning how to handle new equipment and technologies.

Gordon Paprocki, Fleet Services Superintendent for the City of West Allis, says every chance to challenge what they know is important to keeping winter road maintenance crews "at the top of their game."

Paprocki speaks from experience and as coordinator of the Snowplow Rodeo sponsored by APWA, the Wisconsin Chapter of the American Public Works Association. The popular event annually pits two-person teams in a test of driving skill, safety knowledge and mechanical aptitude. The

2009 Rodeo takes place at Lambeau Field in Green Bay on September 9.

Create culture of training

Paprocki says as snow and ice control methods get more sophisticated, so does the equipment. Drivers today operate with multiple plows, computerized

salt-spreaders, video cams and other snow-control tools.

For this reason—and to reduce liability—he notes local agencies strive to establish a culture of training.

"There was a time when we put the snow equipment away and didn't think about it until the fall," Paprocki observes. "Now, training



Driver maneuvers through the Rodeo obstacle course at the 2008 competition.

"Training programs and competitions give drivers and mechanics the chance to sharpen their skills and be ready when the season starts."

Training and equipment events

UPCOMING WORKSHOPS and training events give local officials managing winter maintenance operations and their crews the opportunity to learn what's new.

Winter Road Maintenance
October 2009, various locations
TIC offers seven dates and locations for this popular workshop. The updated program offers practical information and procedures for snow and ice control on local roads. Participants share ideas and learn from others, and can see new plows and spreaders on display. The program benefits elected officials, street and highway superintendents, public works engineers, foremen and others with responsibilities for snow and ice control. Topics for 2009 include safe winter driving,

basic winter road maintenance, winter operations and equipment maintenance. See *Calendar* listing in this issue for dates and locations. Go to *Workshops* at <http://tic.engr.wisc.edu/> for registration information.

14th Annual Eastern Snow Expo
August 26-27 at the Alliant Energy Center in Madison

Presented by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), the Expo presents a showcase of products and services from

industry-leading vendors. For registration details, go to <http://www.transportation.org/meetings/231.aspx>.

20th Annual APWA Snowplow Rodeo
September 9 at Lambeau Field in Green Bay

Wisconsin highway and street departments compete for top honors, connect with other agencies and meet with equipment vendors. Go to <http://wisconsin.apwa.net/> for information on how to register, compete or participate as a judge. Or contact Gordon Paprocki at 414-302-8809 or gpaprocki@ci.west-allis.wi.us. Registration deadline is Sept. 1.

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Teach preventive maintenance

Milwaukee County Fleet Director Daniel Goeden says the off-season training his department does emphasizes cost-saving and preventive maintenance. He explains that both full-time and seasonal employees participate in a range of training programs. “We want everyone to know their equipment, how to use it correctly and how to maintain it. When they don’t, we end up with too much costly downtime.”

Goeden often brings in vendors to train key personnel on new equipment and, in turn, those operators train their colleagues. The department did this last season when they introduced a D-ring plow hitch for three of its trucks. Pivoting on a ring, the blades react quicker and more effectively to uneven pavement and bumps, which helps reduce equipment damage.

Another pre-season strategy Goeden uses to keep equipment safely on the road during snow events is to have welders on the fleet operations crew teach drivers and mechanics how to spot the signs of equipment failure early, before problems escalate.

Spotlight on safety

Maintenance issues also dominate equipment training in Waukesha County. Bob Rauchle, Manager of the county’s Department of Public Works Fleet Division, says maintenance training continues even after operators learn how to work the computerized controls for various pieces of winter equipment.

“Our training goals are to improve productivity, clarify concepts or procedures, build awareness and camaraderie, and improve safety by reducing injuries and accidents.”



The Waukesha County Department of Public Works Fleet Division conducts an on-site snow equipment training session earlier this year.

Training last year involved maintenance and operation of pre-wetting systems newly installed on 40 of the county’s 65 patrol trucks and a 4,000-gallon anti-icing truck deployed in a shared-equipment agreement with Jefferson County.

Rauchle says the Fleet Division schedules training days in the spring and fall. Managers organize people into groups based on topics and rotate them through a series of sessions, covering four-to-six topics. The programs include refresher training to keep employees up to date on existing equipment and safety issues. He relies on topic experts from the county, his own fleet staff or manufacturers’ representatives to lead the training.

Roadeo extends training

Goeden and Rauchle both view the Snowplow Roadeo as a useful extension of their seasonal training. Like other agencies, they host local mini competitions to identify the top three or four teams who will take the field (or parking lot) at Lambeau. Crews that advance to the Green Bay event have a chance to test their skill under various conditions on the Roadeo obstacle course. Besides the

Beloit wins snow and ice control award

APWA recently honored Beloit for its efforts to promote snow and ice removal practices that minimize environmental impacts. The coveted **Award for Excellence in Snow and Ice Control** recognizes the recipient’s efforts in seven key areas, including materials/handling, equipment and training. Congratulations to the City of Beloit Department of Public Works.

competition course, the event this year features a demonstration roundabout.

Paprocki says the Roadeo began 20 years ago with a handful of people in attendance. Today, it draws as many as 70 two-person teams and more than 30 vendors. The event recently added programs for mechanics to give these professionals more exposure to new equipment and methods, and a chance to network with other departments.

“This is one important way the Snowplow Roadeo has grown over time into a place where many people in many local agencies can connect to share ideas,” Paprocki says. “It gets everyone thinking about how to improve their programs back home.” ■

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Resources

<http://wisconsin.apwa.net/>

Wisconsin Chapter of APWA includes links to Snowplow Roadeo and other leadership and education resources.