

SNOW PLOW SAFETY REMINDERS

Winter is just around the corner, and with it, snow and the need to plow the streets. While you may be new to plowing or have years of experience, here are some reminders to help keep you, your employees, and the public safe.

PREPARE

All snow plow drivers should be properly trained on the equipment, the truck, and the routes to be plowed. Make sure before going out that the truck is in proper working order, as is the plow equipment. They should be properly and thoroughly inspected prior to hitting the roadways. Proper maintenance of the truck and equipment will minimize down time and breakdowns on the roadway. Inspect the lights and brakes, the windshield wipers, and defroster. Are the flashers in proper working order and are the horns and back up alarm operational? Inspect the plow bolts and chains, the spreader and auger. Do you have a flare and other safety equipment on board in the event of an accident or emergency?

You should be familiar with your route and the hazards you might encounter, such as mail boxes, fire hydrants, manhole covers, curb drains, and other surface defects. Be aware of and look out for sharp turns and steep hills. Snow weighs heavily on some trees and branches as well as power lines, so they may be lying lower than normal. A pre-storm route inspection may be necessary along with a written map of these hazards in the event a backup driver is called who is not familiar with the area. Always be on the lookout.

REST

As with any situation that involves driving, getting the proper rest is key to avoiding accidents. The chances of an accident occurring will rise dramatically if you are fatigued. The severity of that potential accident also rises. Symptoms of fatigue include yawning, sore or heavy eyes, slower reaction times, finding you're daydreaming and not concentrating on your driving, driving speed creeps up or down, and impatience. If you are experiencing these symptoms please stop and rest. Keep an eye out for your fellow drivers and advise them it's time to rest if you observe these symptoms.

DRIVER SPEED

Choose a speed that is appropriate for the conditions. Do not try to speed up to get done faster, as this leads to accidents. Always be on the lookout for other cars and trucks and be aware of their approaching speed. Be sure to obey the traffic laws and signal your intentions each and every time. You should wear your seatbelt at all times.

CELL PHONE AND RADIO USE

Never use a cell phone while plowing snow. The Bluetooth allows you to be hands free, but even this is NOT recommended due to the distraction it creates. Most plows now have radios to communicate with dispatchers. Use the radio only when necessary to report an accident or other hazard, maybe a stranded driver. Your attention should be on the roadway and the hazards in front of you. Driving with the radio or the phone distracts your attention from the road and will also increase the likelihood of an accident.



BE OBSERVANT OF OTHER TRAFFIC AND WEATHER OBSTACLES

Always be aware of your surroundings and especially other traffic. When moving in reverse, do not rely just on the mirrors, turn your head around and look where you are going, and then look again. You should check your mirrors every three to five seconds to avoid motorists who are in your blind spots. Avoid going in reverse as much as possible as drivers have a tendency to follow plows too closely. Consider the speed of other drivers in comparison to the road conditions. Oncoming traffic will need longer stopping distances in hazardous weather. Weather conditions may reduce visibility for everyone - if you cannot see them, they cannot see you, even with the flashing lights.

BE CAREFUL AND BE SAFE!

There is a TOIRMA Risk Reminder titled *Snow Plow Safety Checklist* at toirma.org/loss-control/toolbox2/Risk-Reminders/. It is also imperative that dump bed stickers are being utilized (*If You Can't See My Mirrors I Can't See You or Caution: Stay Back 50 Feet*). We see a significant increase in snow plow collisions during the winter. Having your dump bed properly labeled could significantly impact the liability outcome when handling third party claims. TOIRMA has dump bed stickers available to our members at no additional cost. Call or email Carla Hilligoss at (217) 444-2111 or chilligoss@ccmsi.com.

