

# SNOW START UP

ISSUE #2: FOCUS ON **EQUIPMENT**

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## BUILDING A WINTER FLEET

When most operators start out or begin to expand operations, equipment purchases are inevitable. The snow industry is known for having cool equipment, but it's important to understand that equipment is a tool for your business, much like key people, great systems or a good marketing plan. The more equipment you have, the more overhead you have; so you need to be strategic about your equipment strategy to get the greatest return on investment.

### KEY CONSIDERATIONS WHEN SELECTING EQUIPMENT

<b>Property types</b>	The property type will influence the equipment you need to service most efficiently. Some clients may also require dedicated equipment for their site(s) that will impact capacity.
<b>Capacity</b>	As you build your customer portfolio, you need to understand your capacity and ensure you have the equipment to uphold your contractual agreements. You also need to factor in capacity reserves in the event of breakdowns.
<b>Budget</b>	If you're starting out or don't have the financial capital or desire to invest in bigger, more expensive equipment, explore leasing or renting—especially for equipment you wouldn't need outside of winter operations. Diligent used equipment purchasing can be a budget-friendly strategy.
<b>Multi-season or snow-only</b>	Starting out, if you have other business lines that utilize the same equipment as in the winter, it might be wise to take this approach to keep initial costs down and get the most out of the investment. There may be instances where you need to have snow-only equipment based on the property type, size and complexity.
<b>Standardization</b>	As you build your fleet, consider standardizing the brands and types of equipment you purchase. This will make for more efficient maintenance, parts stocking and employee training.

## BUYING USED? BE SMART

### DUE DILIGENCE:

- Choose a reliable dealer
- Don't buy sight unseen. You and/or your mechanic should inspect the equipment in person.
- Ask for maintenance records
- Ask to demo the equipment

### PROS:

- ✓ Avoids the "drive off the lot" depreciation
- ✓ May incur less debt if financing
- ✓ May have lower insurance premiums
- ✓ May be able to purchase more for your money than in the new equipment market
- ✓ Depending on the equipment and the supply chain, may have wider availability

### CONS:

- ✗ Repair costs may be higher
- ✗ May not be covered under warranty
- ✗ Overall wear and tear can impact lifecycle





# EQUIPMENT & BIDDING TO WIN

Selection and allocation can boost efficiencies, competitive pricing

➔ During the bidding process, understanding each property and its challenges will help you properly allocate the labor and equipment needed to create the most exact and competitive proposal. Each property type has unique aspects that impact efficiency, so choosing the right equipment approach is essential.

As you build your equipment plan into the proposal, consider these factors:

**Level of Service:** The client's expected outcome(s) on a site or set of sites from the completed performance of snow and ice management services.

**Scope of Work:** The service criteria and specific areas to be serviced on a site or set of sites.

**Start & Completion Times:** When will service begin (triggers or thresholds)? What is the specific time, time range or set of times for completing service expectations?

**Site Size and Complexity:** Accurately measure the space that will need to be serviced. Consider the obstacles and obstructions, layout, topography, traffic patterns and more that may limit the type of equipment that can be used.



## TIPS FOR MORE SUCCESSFUL BIDDING

- 1 Plan before you bid.** Understand your operation and your available labor and equipment. Make sure you either have the labor or equipment available or can quickly secure it in time for the season if you win the bid.
- 2 Use your dealer and manufacturer relationships when you bid.** Equipment manufacturers offer tools that help you understand the right equipment for your vehicles so you get it right the first time.
- 3 Understand the new technology and trends available on the market.** This will help you decide where you should invest in your business when you have the capital available to become more efficient and profitable.
- 4 Utilize your data.** Look at your historical job numbers and know what the average operator in your business can do with his/her equipment. This means you need to keep records and look at your data.

# PROPERTY TYPES & EFFICIENCY FACTORS

Understanding the nuances of every property type you service will help you make the best decisions on equipment and material applications.



## **RESIDENTIAL** **(HOA/Condo/Apartment)**

- Sidewalks
- Vehicle congestion
- Cul de sacs
- Driveway clean-up
- Crosswalks and common areas
- Decorative landscapes
- Pavers, sensitive surfaces



## **SMALL COMMERCIAL** **(Office/Single Businesses)**

- Small parking lot
- Entryways and walkways



## **MEDIUM COMMERCIAL** **(Office Complexes/Strip Malls)**

- Medium parking lot with islands
- Large and numerous walkways and entryways



## **LARGE COMMERCIAL** **(Retail Complexes)**

- Large parking lots with islands, cart corrals and multiple inlets
- Wide and numerous walkways and entryways
- Traffic congestion during peak periods



## **DISTRIBUTION CENTERS**

- Large parking lots
- Loading docks
- Constant traffic
- May require 24/7 access



## **MEDICAL FACILITIES**

- Sidewalks and walkways
- Ambulance bays
- Zero tolerance for snow and ice
- Small to large-sized parking lot(s) depending on facility footprint
- High pedestrian traffic
- 24-hour access required

# FEND OFF ISSUES WITH EXTRA PARTS & MAINTENANCE SCHEDULES

➔ Mother Nature doesn't wait for you to be ready. Establish a schedule for your preseason equipment roll out and scheduled maintenance throughout winter. Identify your company's snow season kickoff date and calculate the time you need to get your equipment ready. Leave plenty of time, knowing that current season maintenance and breakdowns may temporarily derail the schedule. If you can't make a complete switchover, prepare one or two trucks with plows and spreaders in the event of an early storm and add as winter nears.

## Prepare for breakdowns

Having spare parts on hand is a must to prevent extended downtime.

**Order parts early:** The closer you get to the season, the better the chance that parts will be on back order. Stock major parts, such as plow pumps, spreader motors, etc., that may be hard to find in the middle of a storm, early. Let your dealer know your service needs as well as your snow and ice control equipment density to help them stock the appropriate parts.



**Fix it fast:** Keep an equipment "first aid" kit handy. At minimum, every truck should have basic hand tools and a hydraulic hose repair kit.

**Establish breakdown procedures:** Ensure your drivers and site managers follow protocol, including how to report problems and any required documentation.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF SUPPLIER RELATIONSHIPS

Finding the right supplier who will come through in the storm requires a strategic plan and preseason homework:

- 1 Identify quality suppliers.** In addition to competitive pricing, suppliers must be able to deliver on both the quantity and schedule needed by contractors, including in an emergency.
- 2 Look beyond price.** While pricing and payment considerations are important, a good supplier relationship cannot be based solely on price. The vendor with the lowest price may not be able to provide the same reliability and accommodation as its competitors. Consider their supply chain and distributor strength. Ask questions like: "How available are spare parts for this plow?" and "Are there certified mechanics near me that are open 24/7 during snowstorms?" Paying a little more up front may mean limiting loss in the future should a breakdown occur.
- 3 Industry knowledge is key.** A good supplier will understand the challenges contractors face and take time to learn their business model. These suppliers position themselves as a partner in the contractor's business and know which products to present to their contractor-partners and save everyone time and effort.

Visit [www.sima.org/startup](http://www.sima.org/startup) for Snow Start Up resources.

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**POWER PUSHER™ PRO**  
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**Renegade™**  
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Early mornings and late nights call for equipment you can rely on. Well, look no further than the new line up from SnowEx® with the POWER PUSHER PRO hydraulic wing pusher plow and the Renegade poly hopper spreader.

The Renegade spreader is full of ergonomic touches that make it easier to use and the POWER PUSHER PRO hydraulic wing pusher gives you extra capacity when you need it.

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