

SNOW START UP

ISSUE #4: FOCUS ON OPERATIONS

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GET READY FOR WINTER

Your contracts for the 2023-24 winter should be signed. There is a lot to do between now and when the first event is on the radar to ensure your team is prepared and ready for service. Thorough preseason preparations will be worth the time and effort, so don't skip over the key to-dos, including account management, team training, equipment and site preparation, and communication details.

SMOOTH TRANSITIONS

Selling snow services can't exist in a silo — especially as you seek to grow your business. The operations team will have valuable insights to make sure that what is being sold can successfully be achieved. Don't wait until the contracts have been signed to bring operations into the mix. Establishing a process of partnership will result in a smoother transition between sales and operations that will hopefully result in more satisfied customers.



Source: Winter Services, Compass Network presentation. Members can view the presentation at train.sima.org.

KICKOFF WINTER WITH PRESEASON MEETINGS

Snow businesses face unique challenges related to staffing, training and controlling operations. One of the best ways to address these challenges is to conduct an annual snow kickoff meeting.

Who should attend?

Everyone involved in snow operations, including field teams, supervisors, managers, dispatchers and administrative personnel. Hold a separate meeting for service providers so that a clear employee/sub distinction is maintained. Senior managers and owners should attend to send the message that these meetings are important.

When should it be held?

Most snow kickoff meetings should be held in late October or early November (depending on when winter events in your market typically begin). Do it too early and you risk memory loss; too late and you risk being unprepared for the first event (especially if it's a surprise early storm).

Where should it be held?

If presentations or videos are to be shown, make sure everyone can see and hear clearly. If training or demonstrations are planned, equipment should be prepared and available.

Make time for new hires.

Another reason for the meeting may be to complete new hire paperwork and orientation. Conduct this before or after the team convenes for the kickoff meeting.

Make it fun.

An effective kickoff meeting will not only be a productive learning experience, but will also be fun. This meeting is an opportunity to celebrate past successes and enjoy each other's company before winter operations begin.

Q&A

Save plenty of time for questions and create an environment in which people are comfortable asking questions. Having smaller groups will make a big difference in this regard.



TIPS FOR SITE-SPECIFIC TRAINING

In previous issues of Start Up, we shared the benefits of training your team. As you get closer to the season, it's time to ramp up your efforts. Site-specific training without the pressure of a storm bearing down can identify any issues with your winter operations plan and leave time for additional training.



KICKOFF MEETING TOPICS

Each company's kickoff meeting will be a little different, but there are some common topics that should always be included:

- Contact information & communication tree
- On-call expectations / event mobilization
- PPE
- Accident / incident procedures & reporting
- Documentation standards & processes
- Service data submissions, including use of any third-party or client-required apps
- Payroll procedures
- Equipment & routing assignments
- Snow clearing, sidewalk & deicing/anti-icing techniques

1 Training includes everyone. Train or retrain each team member (yes, even veterans) to operate the equipment they'll use on their site(s) safely and properly.

2 Conduct site walkthroughs. Using the site map as a guide, operations managers and their teams should visit each property to visualize operations and identify hazards that may not be visible once snow is on the ground. Each team member should understand not only their specific role but also how the team should work together for safe, efficient and effective operations. Discuss the level of service; review onsite equipment, vehicle and tool usage; review safety procedures and practices; and discuss how you will complete the job from start to finish.

3 Conduct a mock storm dry run from start to finish. Putting the team in realistic conditions can be a very effective way to make sure people and processes are aligning properly before the first snowfall. A live drill will show any cracks in the plan that can be ironed out before a real event. Sites look different in the dark so call the team out at 2 a.m. and observe how the event runs. By putting the equipment under load, you can ensure equipment is operating as it should and that the assigned team members are operating properly and following the engineering plan.

Visit www.sima.org/startup for Snow Start Up resources.

GET PREPPED

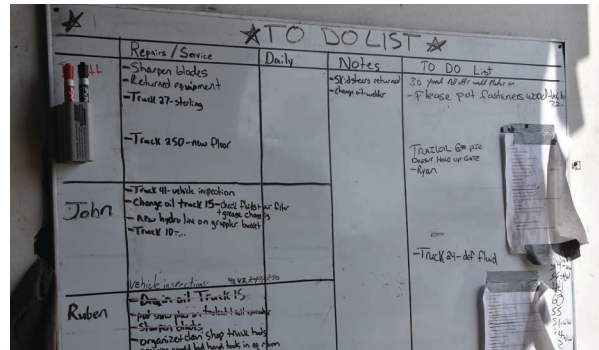
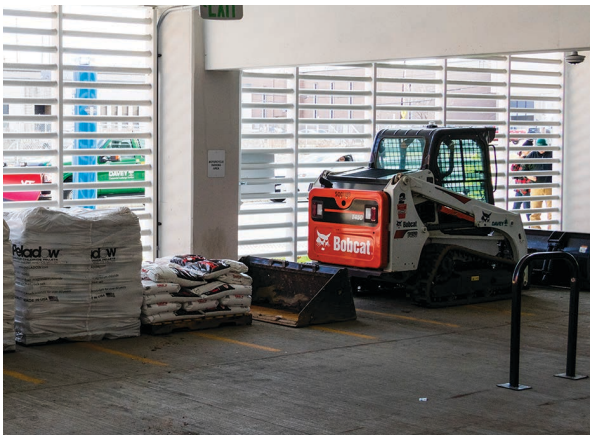
Keep your fleet moving with a readiness schedule

➔ Mother Nature doesn't wait for you to be ready. Establish a schedule for your preseason equipment roll out. Preseason checks, annual services and pre-, during- and post-event checks are all part of a good preventive maintenance plan.

Preparation starts in late summer when you dust off your snow and ice control equipment and perform operation and serviceability checks. Don't be the one who waits until they see snow on the ground before connecting their snowplow and/or spreader. Poorly maintained equipment will cost you in repair expenses and downtime. Follow these tips to prepare your equipment fleet for winter:

CREATE A READINESS SCHEDULE. If you don't already have a fleet readiness schedule, make one. 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 perform other services and can't do a complete switch over to winter operations, use a phased approach. Prepare one or two trucks with plows and spreaders as soon as possible in the event of an early storm and add more equipment as winter nears.

STAGE EQUIPMENT. Work with clients to stage equipment and materials onsite early. This cuts down on deployment time when the first event starts.



PREPARE FOR BREAKDOWNS. You're eventually going to need to make a repair; and Murphy's Law says you'll need to execute that repair at the worst part of the storm in the middle of your route. Keep an equipment "first aid" kit handy. At minimum, every truck should carry basic hand tools and a hydraulic hose repair kit as the first line of defense in the event of a breakdown.



ORDER PARTS EARLY. The closer you get to the start of the season, the better the chance that parts will be on backorder. Early on, stock major parts, such as plow pumps, spreader motors, etc., that may be hard to find in the middle of a storm. Maintaining a great relationship with your dealers is important when it comes to parts availability. Let your dealer know your service needs as well as your snow and ice control equipment density to help them stock the appropriate parts you'll need in the future.

ESTABLISH BREAKDOWN PROCEDURES. Ensure your drivers and site managers follow protocol, including how to report problems and any required documentation.

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