

DPW - Infrastructure Services Division
Pothole Repair Activities
February 2008

The following is a short summary and update on DPW's efforts to address the issue of potholes and maintenance for your information and reference.

OVERVIEW

- Moisture from snow melt-off and rains creeps into pavement cracks, joints and depressions and if not properly drained away, will collect beneath the surface. This moisture begins to soften the underlying base support of the roadway and is accelerated by winter freeze-thaw cycles typically seen in spring.
- These repeating cycles has come early and often this year and with extended plowing operations has resulted in a proliferation of potholes breaking up in the streets. Existing pothole repairs get broken down and new ones form. Pavement sections heave with the frost and settle back down.
- Pothole requests to the DPW Call Center are up 45% for January from last year due to these conditions. However, the real spring season has yet to come and conditions may become worst before substantial improvements are seen.
- All streets will have some potholes develop during their useful life and cannot be completely prevented.
- The continuing presence of potholes is a strong indication that the roadway pavement and base are beginning to fail and needs some additional remedial attention. Pothole repairs only fix the isolated location and do not restore a deteriorating roadway.

HOW TO REPORT

- The most effective way to report a pothole is to call the DPW Call Center 286-CITY so the location can be entered into the City's database.
- Street supervisors review this database at least twice a day and prioritize work based on safety hazards, traffic volume and typically arterials have priority over local streets. Crews are scheduled in assigned areas to be efficient and minimize field travel between locations.
- Motorists must remain alert and aware of changing roadway conditions, reduce speeds and allow ample room for safe maneuvering if warranted.
- Claims against the City must be filed in writing with documentation submitted to the City Clerk. The City Attorney will review the merits of all claims.

RESPONSE

- At this time, all available City street forces are out patching potholes throughout the City. The average goal of two working days to complete a repair is unrealistic during this time of escalation. A backlog of complaints is expected and the response is prioritized.
- Arterial street are addressed before residential
- Staffing at this time (and all through winter) consists of 9-10 patching street crews throughout the City. This winter staffing level is not intended to handle the seasonal flood of pothole complaints but to maintain average workloads.
- Second shift personnel are available for call-out response through the City Hall Operator for general street maintenance emergencies.
- Additional seasonal crews are typical staffed beginning in mid-April to address this workload. This year, crews will begin to be called back two months early, scheduled for mid-February to assist in this increased response. Additional crews will be staffed as weather improves.
- The City has two self contained Road Patcher vehicles which allow potholes to be filled by one operator; however this vehicle can not be operated in freezing temperatures and is not put into service until spring.

REPAIR PROCEDURES

- Pothole patching in the late winter offers very challenging conditions. Potholes are damp, full of water, ice or snow and adjacent pavement areas are broken in the hole.
- These areas are cleaned as best as practical however, in these conditions, the asphalt patch does not adhere as well to the existing pavement and repair may break down. Added base prep material is used in some repairs to increase bonding to existing pavement.
- Crews will compact this material and patch may be slightly elevated or uneven. This repair may become susceptible to snow plow damage.

MATERIALS USED

- Hot mix asphalt is not fluid enough to be placed in cold temperatures and is not available. A winter mix of cold asphalt emulsion and stone is used to fill these holes. Cold mix is the quickest and easiest material to place under these conditions. This repair is considered a temporary repair and will likely be replaced in summer with hot asphalt.
- Typically, local asphalt plants do not begin producing hot asphalt until late April. The City has contacted and made arrangements with a supply vendor for an early start-up of asphalt hot mix production in smaller batches beginning in mid-March.

SUMMARY

- Note that maintenance of potholes is not the effective solution to deteriorating roadways; as only so much can be effectively patched. Continued and extensive potholes on any given street are signs of continuing deterioration of pavement material and base support and need to be addressed with permanent capital improvements.
- DPW-Infrastructure Services will continue to complete this critical maintenance work in a timely and effective manner during this time of escalation.

CONTACTS

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