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## Lesson Seven: Safety Practices



### **A. How to Make Safety Work for You**

- 1. In reality, most safety practices are just good common sense.**
- 2. But you need one other item** along with good common sense – the right attitude.
- 3. These two items together**, good common sense and the right attitude, will lead you down the road to safety. With these two items:
  - a. you realize the importance of safety and the importance of knowing your job and
  - b. you know that safety has to be constantly emphasized, so that it remains in focus at all times.

### **B. Safety Preparations**

- 1. Training** - Are you prepared for the winter job ahead of you?
  - a. Knowing your job is essential. Your safety starts with training.
    - i. A well-trained snowfighter will be a safe snowfighter.
  - b. Training is essential:
    - i. to prepare you for your snowfighting duties,

- ii. for proper handling of materials,
- iii. for proper maintenance of equipment and
- iv. for proper operation of the equipment.

**2. Knowing your route is also essential.**

- a. “Dry runs” (running your routes just prior to winter) can be a valuable safety practice.
  - i. Take notice of what has changed since last winter.
    - a) New developments with new roads or streets and new driveways could have been constructed.
    - b) New drainage facilities or new utilities with poles or manholes might be present.
      - 1) Take notice of what’s overhead – low hanging wires or tree limbs.
    - c) New curbs or medians or new guardrail may appear.
  - ii. Take notice of all these new obstacles, and make notes of locations and which obstacles could be marked or delineated to allow you to recognize them when covered with all that white stuff.
  - iii. Take notice of existing obstacles which have always been there but may cause conflict (such as mailboxes).

**Exercise: Knowing Your Route**

True or False? Being familiar with your route before snow and ice removal starts is not important.

**C. Crew Safety**

**1. Are we ready to fight the storm?**

- a. The first item is adequate sleep or rest prior to starting work.
  - i. Plowing and spreading can mean long hours, leaving you tired and exhausted. Proper sleep or rest prior to beginning this task will keep you awake and alert with safety remaining important.

**2. Warm clothes**

- a. Multi-layers of warm clothing give an additional advantage of being able to adjust to changing temperatures or conditions.
  - i. Driving in the truck cab can be quite different than being out of the truck adjusting or repairing a part of the equipment.

**3. Other recommended personal protective equipment may include:**

- a. hard hat with liner,
- b. safety vest,
- c. boots,
- d. gloves,
- e. a well-stocked first-aid kit in the cab and
- f. a thermos and lunch box, particularly for those long rural routes requiring several hours away from any convenient pit stop.

**4. For your winter emergency survival kit, include:**

- a. flashlight with extra batteries,
- b. ice scraper/snow brush,
- c. flares or reflectors,
- d. flags for traffic control and
- e. shovel and sand or other material to aid in traction.

**5. Each truck shall also contain an Accident form, S-11, and Insurance card (see Appendix for copies of existing forms).**

**6. Every truck cab should be equipped with a fire extinguisher.**

- a. Checking the pressure status of the extinguisher as a routine checklist item could prevent an unsafe situation.

**D. Material Safety**

**1. All chemical manufacturers are required to have a Materials Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) for each of their products**

- a. The safe user will be familiar with all the information on these sheets.
- b. Everything you need to know about the chemical is included in the MSDS and each county garage has copies readily available for easy access.

## **E. Vehicles and Equipment Safety**

### **1. Preventive maintenance is safety.**

- a. Good preventive maintenance insures the vehicle will operate with optimum performance and less breakdowns resulting in safer operation.
  - i. Of course, you, as operator, are a responsible part of the preventive maintenance program. The daily checks and pre-trip inspection, EM 78 form, you make on your truck are important at any time.
- b. Relative to winter operations, however, we'll deal only with some major points for safety.
  - i. Check:
    - a) fluid levels,
    - b) tire tread and inflation,
    - c) brakes,
    - d) windshield wipers and wiper blades and
    - e) heater and defroster.
      - 1) Yes, even the heater relates to safety. If the heater is not working properly and you are too cold or too hot, your total concentration will not be on fighting the storm, making you less safe in operations.
  - ii. Your pre-trip inspection should include clean windows and mirrors, again a safety necessity.

### **2. Check all lights!**

- a. You will need all lights when plowing and spreading.
  - i. You are out there because of unsafe conditions. Lights are not only for you to see, they are for you to be seen!

### **3. Back-up alarm, plow flags, and warning signs on the rear of the truck are good safety items for you and others in preventing accidents.**

### **4. Radio communications**

- a. A necessity for efficient operations but also a necessity for safety.
- b. Check radio communications for proper working order.

- c. During operations remember to communicate to your supervisor or base station any time you exit your vehicle.

**5. Wear your safety belt.**

- a. The use of your safety belt should become a habit, a natural action prior to turning the key in the ignition.
  - i. When your plow hits that raised manhole, you will realize the value of the safety belt habit.

**F. Facility Safety**

- 1. Your maintenance facility or garage can become a safety hazard**, if not maintained properly.
  - a. Good housekeeping within and around the facility results in a safe working environment for everyone.

**G. Operations Safety**

- 1. You already know how to drive a truck.** But if you are a new snowfighter, practicing with a plow and a loaded spreader could be very beneficial.
  - a. The extra weight and the different center of gravity gives a whole new feel to the ‘monster’ that you will be operating in adverse unsafe road conditions.
- 2. Know your truck and equipment.**
  - a. Know your safe backing rules.
    - i. Do the circle of safety, back slowly, back straight and use an outside guide if possible.
      - a) Backing accidents number more than any other type of accident in our road maintenance operations.
    - ii. A backup alarm shall be standard on all equipment.
  - b. When using a single-axle dump truck, if you are spreading material and running with your truck bed up, the bottom of the truck bed should not be higher than the top of the cab.
    - i. And watch for overhead wires and tree limbs. If using a tandem axle dump truck, the bed should not be raised while running.
- 3. When changing plow blades** raise the plow and block it securely before proceeding to loosen bolts.
  - a. Never place yourself under the blade or in an unsafe position.

4. **When working on or unclogging a spreader**, make sure your engine and all power to the spreader is turned off.
  - a. In addition, relieve all pressure in the hydraulics and then use a tool to unclog.
    - i. This bears emphasizing because of actual accidents that have occurred. Even though all power is off, the reserve pressure in the hydraulic lines can still turn the auger as it is freed.
    - ii. Using a tool to unclog prevents the habit of sticking your hands in hazardous places.
5. **When greasing spreader fittings**, always use protective eyewear to avoid eye injury.
6. **Defensive driving and obeying traffic laws** are important, along with wearing your safety belt as mentioned before.
  - a. Do not speed. Speed kills.
  - b. Remember to keep enough distance in front of you for adequate stopping distance.
    - i. The extra size and weight of your vehicle and the road conditions will necessitate a substantially greater stopping distance than you normally need.
7. **Be aware of fatigue.** Long hours of plowing and spreading can be exhausting.
8. **Know your own limitations**
  - a. Twelve-hour shifts are common, especially if crews are working ‘round-the-clock’ with twelve on and twelve off.
  - b. Everyone needs a break – either a short coffee break or a rest break. Advise your supervisor if your fatigue level is too great to continue working.
    - i. This can differ from one person to another. One individual may plow 12 hours without a break or with only a coffee break, while someone else can only go a few hours between breaks.
9. **Use caution when entering and exiting truck**
  - a. During winter weather, the truck’s side steps may become covered or packed with snow and ice.
  - b. When exiting the truck, jumping instead of using side steps can result in injuries. Use provided steps and handrails to prevent unnecessary injury.

**10. One last factor – keep cool, anger clouds judgment!**

- a. Even when your residents are out there waving their snow shovel and yelling at you, maintain your cool and stay safe.

