

Managers' Corner

By Brad Eilts

Construction season gets underway April 2

Distribution is gearing up for another busy construction season. Distribution employees working at Vadnais and the plant, along with employees laid off this winter, will begin returning to distribution starting Monday, April 2.

A total of 8.1 miles of water main construction is planned this year. Five miles of main replacement will be in street reconstruction projects. SPRWS crews will complete the pipework with contractor excavation for 2.6 miles of main and contractors will be responsible for the pipework for 2.4 miles of main. Pipe bursting and trench excavation methods will be used for the remaining 3.1 miles of main replacement outside of street reconstruction projects.

Pipe bursting will require SPRWS crews to excavate pits approximately 500 feet apart to allow a contractor to pull 2.1 miles of HDPE (high-density polyethylene) pipe through existing water main. After the HDPE pipe is installed, SPRWS crews will excavate and complete pipework for service connections, hydrants, and other connections to the distribution system. SPRWS crews will also excavate trench and complete pipework for another mile of main replacement. This is a large increase in excavation by SPRWS crews compared to recent years.

The lead replacement program will include the replacement of 350 lead services with copper pipe. Only 15 lead service replacements are in street res-

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Less salt to be used around SPRWS



File photo.

Less salt will be used on sidewalks and the parking lot in an effort to protect our watershed and waterways from the pollutant in the future. Staff will work harder to remove snow down to the concrete on sidewalks and down to the asphalt in the parking lot so that less salt is needed and the sun can help to melt the remaining snow and ice.

Salt (chloride) is harming our lakes, rivers, and streams, and there is no good way to get it back out of those bodies of water once it enters it. While salt works well for de-icing roads, parking lots and sidewalks, it can cause serious damage to our waterways, corrode infrastructure and vehicles, and affect plants.

With that in mind, SPRWS is doing its part to reduce chloride in our waterways by reducing salt use. That doesn't mean that the utility is putting safety aside by using less salt.

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Using less salt on area surfaces will protect water quality

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“Can we make it safe with less salt?” Rick Svoboda, supply systems supervisor asked. “I think we can.”

“Safety is number one,” said Svoboda. “We haven’t forgotten that.”

More efficient snow removal and better salt application can have good results, he said. The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency makes a special effort to point out that more salt does not mean more melting. And that salt doesn’t work at all under 15 degrees.

The Vadnais crews that maintain our parking lot and sidewalks will be working to remove snow down to the pavement when possible. This will allow the sun to help melt remaining snow and ice, and it will require less salt.

Salt use will also be concentrated where it is most necessary.

“We want to make high traffic areas as safe as we can,” said Svoboda. But salt won’t be spread all over the place with a spreader; it will be directed in coverage by hand from a scoop. The application will take longer, but it will use less salt and that salt will land on the sidewalk, not all around it. On sidewalks, salt is not always targeted at melting the snow and ice, but also providing traction.

Snow in the parking lot will be completely removed where possible. It will be hauled to the sludge fields rather than plowing it and piling it on one end of the parking lot. That will reduce snow melt and re-freeze and allow melting snow and ice to drain off of the parking lot. Plowing from curb to curb will allow the melted run off to flow into catch basins. And shoveling to expose the grass along the sidewalks will help melting snow absorb into the ground. Of course, those goals will need cooperation from mother nature. When it snows during the day and cars drive over it as it melts, it creates ruts that can’t be plowed very well

when the crews are able to get to a reasonably empty parking lot. Still, the crews will be working at achieving their new goals even when the snowfall isn’t as cooperative as they would like.

So, what to do when the snowplows can’t clear down to the bare pavement? Or it’s still snowing when you’re at work and the sidewalks aren’t clear? You’re a Minnesotan! You know what to do.

- Be careful getting in and out of your vehicle.
- Walk with caution, especially when navigating from your car to the main building.
- Take your time and use small steps to keep your balance.
- Keep your arms free if possible, to help with balance.
- Be aware of the temperature outside; there are little blue and grey disks posted outside that turn blue to indicate it’s freezing. If it is, be aware there could be ice under that snow.
- Check out where the puddles in the parking lot are located when you leave for the day. Come morning, they could be ice.
- Wear practical shoes or boots with good traction.
- Look ahead for possible ice hazards, not down at your cell phone.
- Use handrails where they exist.
- Use salt buckets near entrances to salt icy areas if necessary.
- Walk on rugs when you enter a building to avoid slipping in wets spots caused by melting ice and snow.

March is one of the snowiest months of the year, so we’re not done with snow yet. Keep these simple tips in mind and we can have a safe facility and use less salt on our surfaces.

Construction season starts with staff returning April 2

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toration projects. SPRWS service crews will excavate the remaining lead replacements in 2018 and 2019 mill & overlay projects, where copper has been installed in private property, and where lead services require maintenance.

The preventative maintenance program will also be a high priority. The goal for Uni-Directional Flushing and Large Valve Exercising programs is to complete 20 percent of the distribution system. All hydrants will also be inspected.