



Ontario

Ministry of Municipal Affairs & Housing



Association of Municipalities of Ontario

ONTARIO CENTRE FOR MUNICIPAL BEST PRACTICES

393 University Ave., Suite 1701, Toronto, Ontario M5G 1E6

BEST PRACTICE SUMMARY REPORT

January 2003

RO – WC – 03 - 09

Roads – Winter Control – Detailed Winter Control Handbook

Practice identification: Roads -Winter Control – Detailed Winter Control Handbook

Case- study municipality: County of Grey

Key Words: Operating Procedures

Benefits which resulted from adoption of the Practice

- **Clarifies the responsibility of all parties responding to Winter storm events**
- **Well defined maintenance objectives and better assurance that the approved maintenance standard will be delivered**
- **Provides evidence of due diligence in the event of challenge**
- **Outlines what internal and external arrangements have been made with respect to boundary roads, shared service facilities, etc**

Description of the Practice in the Case-study municipality:

The County of Grey prepares a comprehensive Winter Control Handbook that identifies maintenance standards, materials application rates and expected load coverage by various sizes of equipment. It details plough, sander and combination routes complete with operator assignments and shift coverage including holiday schedules. The Manual also details the County's communication strategy with area media, school board transportation agencies and the public.

It outlines what internal and external arrangements have been made with respect to boundary road work as well as shared recharge facilities and loader responsibilities, and it provides pre-event planning for the many winter road closings that occur due to reduced visibility and drifting snow.

The practice has been in place for over 20 years. The handbook is distributed to all roads staff and operators, to neighbouring municipalities and local municipalities within the County, to all County Councillors, and to the OPP. Copies are available for the public on request, in order to explain the County's Winter operations and maintenance standards.

Several other municipalities in Ontario undertake a similar practice; however the comprehensive nature of Grey County's Winter Control Handbook was unique.

Grey County is an Upper Tier municipality (pop.82,570) located on the south shore of Georgian Bay. Its winter operations are significantly affected by "lake effect" snow storms and blowing conditions. Terrain is rolling to rocky, containing extensive apple orchards and other agricultural operations. The Niagara Escarpment, an UNESCO Biosphere reserve, transects Grey County on its way from Niagara Falls to Tobermory.

Evaluation of the Practice

Efficiency

The County of Grey has lower than average Winter control costs per lane kilometre for its population size of municipality, while appearing to achieve a high level of effectiveness in response to its frequent Winter storms

Effectiveness

The Manual provides clear and consistent information to all operating staff as part of initial training and acts as a reference throughout the season. For less routine issues, its instructions avoid haphazard field decisions on "Reasonableness and Practicality", which are now significant criteria with respect to Minimum Maintenance Standards regulations. The manual provides a checklist of winter preparedness. Public concerns about not receiving service are significantly reduced if written policies show what should happen and verification is available.

Statutory requirement

Municipalities "with jurisdiction over a highway or bridge shall keep it in a state of repair that is reasonable in the circumstances, including the character and location of the highway or bridge" (Municipal Act 2001 s 44 (1)). This Manual in effect declares what the Council of Grey County feels is reasonable. Public access to this information helps establish the relationship between road user and the road

authority with regard to conditions to be expected and level of care to be taken by drivers in adverse weather conditions.

Replication

Municipalities with several semi-independent operating areas would benefit the most, since the Manual establishes a common approach to similar issues and restrains any impulse by each yard to customize each activity. A municipality with a single crew leader, and without special night and weekend shifts, would receive less benefit, although documentation of maintenance practices is advisable in any municipality.

The costs to implement this practice are limited to the staff time spent in accumulating and updating the information for the handbook. It could be implemented in a month, ideally at the start of winter's planning cycle (June) and amended periodically as details became firm.

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