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From the Office of the
Jackson County Road Commission
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Jackson County Road Commission

Winter preparation

The Jackson County Road Commission is reminding motorists that winter driving is on its way.

During the last few weeks, the Road Commission has been hard at work preparing for the upcoming winter. Preparations have included repair and set up of all winter maintenance equipment, as well as stockpiling salt, sand, and brine for the impending slippery road conditions. While salt costs are expected to be significantly higher this winter, the Road Commission expects to have an adequate supply for this season. Winter maintenance is a top priority for the Road Commission and we take preparation for winter very seriously. As we prepared for this winter, we are also encouraging motorists to prepare before the first snow flies.

The Jackson County Road Commission maintains 1,583 centerline miles of county roads under its jurisdiction. The Road Commission is also contracted by the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) to maintain 561 lane miles of state highways within the county. These highways include I-94, US-127 North & South, M-60, US-12, US-27, M-106, M-50N, M-50S, M-99, and, M-124.

As was the case last year MDOT has continued to designate Priority #1 (orange route) and Priority #2 (blue) routes for winter maintenance on all state highways. The Road Commission will continuously maintain both Priority #1 and Priority #2 routes on behalf of MDOT during and after a winter storm until MDOT's defined level of service can be achieved and roads are passable.

Similar to our efforts on the state highways the Road Commission will maintain non subdivision paved roads during and after a winter storm. Due to budgetary constraints, the Road Commission is unable to provide overtime winter maintenance on subdivision streets or unpaved roads unless 6 inches or more of snowfall accumulates, or there is an ice storm.

During normal conditions, the Road Commission can generally keep the state highways and paved primary county roads free of ice and snow. However, the pavement may still be wet. When temperatures fall between 10 to 20 degrees, the action of the salt (which lowers the freezing temperature of water) takes longer to work and refreezes at a much faster rate. Salt is very ineffective at temperatures below 10 degrees. The melting rate and dilution of the salt slows way down, and the refreezing process accelerates even more. This causes potential for a more dangerous condition than what previously existed. To continue to apply salt at these temperatures will actually cause more problems than it solves. In addition, when wind speeds exceed 15 mph, the snow that would normally blow across a dry road will adhere to the wet pavement. This will also speed the dilution of the salt, creating a packed-ice type condition with traffic driving over it.

In winter, motorists are reminded to follow Michigan's basic speed law, which requires them to drive at a "careful and prudent speed" in all conditions and which allows them to stop within the clear distance ahead. It may mean driving slower than the posted speed limit.

The Road Commission also reminds motorists, property owners and children to follow these winter safety tips:

For Motorists

- Always wear your seatbelt and be sure that your children are properly buckled up
- Be cautious of bridges that may be icy when the approaching pavement is clear and dry
- Do your best to minimize distractions so your focus can be on driving
- Slow down when visibility is low or when road conditions are snowy or icy
- Accelerate and brake slowly and avoid abrupt steering maneuvers
- Don't pump anti-lock brakes
- Don't attempt to pass a snow plow vehicle while they are plowing
- NEVER attempt to pass a snowplow on the right
- Plow drivers have limited visibility and they cannot see directly behind their trucks
- Make sure your windshield is clear of ice and snow before you start out. "Peephole driving" is unsafe for you and other drivers on the road
- Snowplow drivers need all the help they can get when it comes to maneuvering large trucks through traffic and along the roadways for the benefit of all of us. Please do your part and "Don't Crowd the Plow!"

For Property Owners

- Don't plow snow across the road or shovel snow from your driveway onto shoulders or roadways
- Don't pile snow high near intersections or driveways obstructing others vision
- Park vehicles away from the road and follow local parking ordinances related to snow removal
- Keep basketball hoops, garbage bins, reflectors, and other items away from the road
- Keep areas around mailboxes clear in order to assist in safe mail delivery and to help prevent damage to mailboxes
- Maintaining the end of your driveway could decrease chances of getting plowed in, or having your mailbox damaged

For Children

- Never build snow forts, make tunnels, or play in ditches or snow banks by the road
- Stay away from the edge of the roadway as you wait for the school bus, or watch the snow plow
 - Stay away from the end of a driveway when a snow plow is approaching
 - Keep sleds and toys away from the roadways at all times
 - Remember, the plow driver can't always see you

The Jackson County Road Commission is ready to do everything we can within our physical and financial resources to keep the roads in a safe and reasonable condition for public travel this winter. Motorists must also do their part to be prepared for the challenges of winter driving. The Jackson County Road Commission must thank our employees and remember that they are the backbone of the JCRC. Through their dedication and commitment to serving the motoring public, our roads are maintained at the highest possible level.