

Essex County – Winter Control Program – 2009/2010

As we begin another Essex County winter, motorists need to take extra precautions and adjust their driving habits to cold, icy and snowy conditions. Winter travel calls for extra care even under normal weather conditions. Snow and ice on roadways can reduce tire traction, while vehicle exhaust and ice fog can reduce visibility.

OVERVIEW OF PROGRAM

Essex County Highways (ECH) is responsible for 730 centerline kilometers of road network of various classes of highway from high volume urban arterials to rural highways that provide a safe and efficient route of transportation for road users within the region. Winter maintenance services are provided from four (4) active and two (2) seasonal depots which are spread out across the County, and cover sixteen (16) truck routes. Essex County Highways' Winter Control Program is designed to achieve the following goals:

1. To meet or exceed where possible the Minimum Maintenance Standards for Municipal Highways
2. To reduce negative environmental impacts resulting from Winter Control Operations
3. To reduce or control expenditures through innovative and proactive management strategies.

Essex County Highways has a two-step approach towards preventing slippery road conditions. These techniques include pre-wetting of the salt prior to being applied to the road and anti-icing, which involves direct application of the brine to the dry road. Our winter maintenance program also includes:

- A Global Positioning System (GPS) to track salt application to monitor use for both safety and environmental protection
- Computerized controls on vehicles to precisely spread salt on roads
- The use of salt-brine solution on the roads before snowfalls to prevent snow and ice from binding to the pavement
- Weather stations to update weather and pavement conditions

The following are “Fast Facts” of the Program:

- 730 centerline km of roads
- 87 bridges
- 4 – ‘Active’ Depots; 2 – ‘Seasonal’ Depots
- Salt Storage Capacities (6,000 tonnes)
- 16 salt/plow routes
- 21 pieces of equipment, dispatched in “normal” winter event
- day/night crews
- continuous weather monitoring
- road patrols
- average annual salt usage 17,500 tonnes
- average annual program expenditures \$2,000,000.00
- typical number of “events” 80 to 90

LEARN MORE

The Salt Management Plan (SMP) for Essex County Highways sets out a policy and procedural framework for ensuring continuous improvement on effective delivery of winter maintenance services and the management of road salt used in winter maintenance operations.

A copy of the SMP can be obtained from our website www.countyofessex.on.ca or contact Maintenance Operations at 519-326-6891

For more safe driving tips, visit the Ontario Ministry of Transportation's website at www.mto.gov.on.ca and follow the Road Safety links to view or download the driver's handbook: *Winter Driving: Be Prepared, Be Safe!*

The Ministry of Transportation Ontario (MTO) winter driving brochure can be found at www.ontario.ca/winterdriving.ca. Get up-to-date information on road conditions, construction projects and traffic conditions on major highways through MTO cameras. Or call the ministry's road information line at 416-235-4686, toll-free at 1-800-268-4686.