

## **Saving Money and Sand in a Small Town**

"Our paved roads had so much sand on them, they looked like gravel roads !" Use this as a comment cloud above a guy's head.

Since Bob Drisko started working for the Town of Chelsea back in February, 1998, he has been a proactive Town Manager using technology to its fullest. One of the items that he wants to employ this year is requiring his plowing contractor to install a ground speed control device.

In the past, this town with 26 miles was applying 5,500 cubic yards of winter sand/salt per year (that's over 200 cubic yards per mile !!). Realizing that this might be a little high, he began searching for a better way. Calibrating a sander still required an operator to turn knobs when changing speeds. Bob thought that it would be better to simplify this by using the ground speed control device. Snow plow drivers, after driving for long hours, want something simple. "The last thing that they want to do is keep tweaking the sander."

By having the contractor use the ground speed control device, the town used 1,800 cubic yards of sand last winter. The reduction in costs for the town comes not only from savings in sand, but cleanup as well. Bob projects a savings of nearly \$13,000 for the town, which is from sand application expenses alone, not to mention the savings in cleanup costs.

Part of the snow plowing contract required the contractor to attend a Maine Local Road Center (MLRC), Winter Maintenance Workshop. Bob wanted the contractor to fully understand what the job entailed and what measurements he will be looking at. Paul Soucy, who was awarded the snow plowing contract, said at first he was rather skeptical at what Bob was proposing, but after attending MLRC's Winter Maintenance Workshop, it was apparent to him why Bob wanted to go this way. "I learned a lot about how to set up my equipment, like calibrating, and when to attack the storms. Having this experience makes it easier for me to meet Bob's expectations and do it in a positive light. Not only has Bob been happy about this years snow removal, but I am getting a lot of compliments from the citizens of Chelsea for doing a good job."

To further reduce the town's costs, Bob is interested in using an infrared thermometer to accurately measure the ground temperature to identify when deicers should and should not be used. He also wants to start using Calcium Chloride more in snow and ice control. Last year, the town decided to separate the contract for plowing and supplying sand. "Last year the price for sand was over \$5 per cubic yard, this year the price is less."

It does take time to prepare contracts, but in the long run according to Bob, the tax payers gets a better deal.

