

Manta delares war on winter

By GRACE R. DOVE
Post Staff

Jackson Township road foreman Rich Manta has declared war on winter storms. He sees each snowfall as a military objective.

His weapons are salt, cinders, anti-skid material and the township's four plow trucks. His soldiers are the men on the road crew.

Appointed October 18, 1993, Manta had less than two weeks to familiarize himself with the township's 25 miles of roads before the season's first plowable snowfall came with no advance warning on Halloween.

"Ever since, I've been out plowing with the guys until the cows come home," he said. "We've been hit with everything but the kitchen sink."

Manta brings a wealth of military construction experience to his job, having served 16 years with the U.S. Army 223rd Aviation Brigade, the 365th Engineers and the 328th and 104th Aviation brigades.

Presently a sergeant and up for promotion, he served in Vietnam and filled a stateside post during the Persian Gulf War.

Manta also is an instructor with the 2091st Army Reserve School. "This isn't a job that you can

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Rich Manta
Jackson Twp. road supervisor

learn about from a textbook," he said. "You have to go out and do it - the magnitude is immense. You don't just hop into a truck and go out and move snow."

Each road must be approached individually, Manta said. Drivers must know where the potholes, manhole covers and ditches are, so that they can avoid them. Making the job more difficult, a third of the township's roads are dirt.

He also had to learn his equipments' capabilities. Narrower roads or dead-ends with small turnarounds require the smaller trucks, while roads with hills might need the four-wheel drive or diesel truck, Manta said.

Simply opening a road requires plows to make two sweeps, one in each direction, which can take up to two hours, he said. Later they can go back, spread more cinders and widen the plowed areas.

"We hope that people realize that we can't get every road down to bare pavement immediately," he said. "It takes time."

Cars parked where they don't belong and people plowing snow from their driveways back onto a cleared roadway make things worse for the plow crew, Manta said.

During December, the road crew faced a snowstorm every other week, while in January the storms came in like clockwork every week. During the week of severe storms and record cold in January, Manta and his men worked two weeks straight without a day off, logging several 16-hour shifts. The weather took its toll on both his men and his equipment.

He attributes his success to his men, all "top notch" and well trained by the late Jack Bombick, who had been road foreman for many years and died on the job.

"It's hard to follow in the footsteps of a guy like Jack," Manta said. "He worked hard and was very dedicated."

He says that the previous winter plows had many area residents spoiled and unaccustomed to driving on snow and ice.

"Now we're back to the old-fashioned winters," he said.

Woodridge

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section. Salt keeps the ice down, they said.

Supervisor Walter Glogowski explained that there is a lag time of up to half an hour when the trucks run out of salt and must go for another load.

Supervisor Andy Kasko added that no one could get road salt for several weeks in January. He asked residents not to plow out their driveways and leave the snow on the roads which have already been plowed.

Township secretary Henry Zbiek reported that the January snow removal expenditures were: \$2,270 for anti-skid material, \$1,888 for salt, \$9,017 for wages, \$3,905 for repairs and \$1,168 for fuel.

"We have spent our entire snow removal budget of \$18,224 in one month," he said.

The supervisors asked professional urban planner Marlene Pawlowski to prepare an estimate of updating the township's zoning map for the March meeting.

In other business, the supervisors voted to:

- Pass an ordinance designating the Wyoming Valley Sanitary Authority as the receiver of its sewage. This ordinance was necessary because the township's former sewage treatment plant, the Dallas Area Municipal Authority, now ties into the WWSA instead of treating its own sewage.
- Appointed Russ Smith of Cross Creek road to fill the unexpired term of John Trescavage on the Municipal Authority.
- Authorize zoning officer John Krupa to attend training sessions in Scranton and at the Penn State main campus, for \$20 and \$160 plus mileage, respectively.

Severe weather busts snow-removal budgets

By GRACE R. DOVE
Post Staff

The old-fashioned winter weather that Dad once bragged about has returned with a vengeance.

Unfortunately it's become much more expensive. Representatives from area municipalities met last week with the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA) to total the past month's road clearing expenses, in the hope of getting some reimbursement from either the state or the federal government.

Because road conditions and finances vary between municipalities, January's weather has affected some more than others.

Dallas Borough
Already over budget by about \$2,200, the borough has spent \$11,000, according to borough manager Milt Lutsey. It spent \$2,900 to buy 56 tons of salt and 183 tons of anti-skid material (coarse gravel mixed with cinders.)

Dallas Township
Treasurer Glenn Howell estimated that the township has used half of the \$50,000 budgeted for snow removal. Because salt from its supplier, Bradco in Towanda, isn't available, roadmaster Frank Wagner has had to make do with anti-skid material alone. "I've gone through more than 500 tons and could use 500 more," he said.

Franklin Township
Secretary Sandy Race estimated that the township had spent \$11,000, while it had budgeted \$8,000. "We have spent about \$5,000 on salt and anti-skid," she said. "We ended up buying salt in large bags because we had been told that bulk salt was being rationed."

Harveys Lake
Secretary Carole Samson said that while the borough had budgeted \$3,500 for snow removal and materials, it had spent \$3,765 on wages and \$4,365 on materials.

Because the borough regularly buys salt in 80-lb. bags, at \$4.75 per bag for a 375 bag delivery, it hasn't had any problem getting it.

Storage problems prevent the borough from buying bulk salt, Samson said.

Jackson Township
Secretary Henry Zbiek estimated that the township spent its entire 1994 snow removal budget (\$18,224) in January: \$2,270 for anti-skid, \$1,888 for salt, \$9,017 for wages and \$1,168 for fuel.

Lehman Township
Roadmaster Doug Ide estimated that he spent \$16,000 of the \$40,000 budgeted for snow removal - \$9,000 for labor and fuel and \$7,000 for materials.

Kingston Township
Township manager Jeff Box said that he has spent approximately \$14,000 in wages and overtime and \$7,000 in materials - 700 tons of anti-skid and 300 tons of salt.

"We're not over budget because we always budget for a worst-case scenario," he said.

Low-salt diet

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more screened ash available.

"We can't get salt from our supplier, Bradco in Towanda," Wagner said. "Right now we're relying on anti-skid material. I've gone through more than 500 tons of that and could use another 500."

Back Mountain municipalities obtain their winter road materials from several sources. All are tied into the state's piggyback system, in which prices are somewhat lower because the materials are bought in bulk.

Cinders are also available from the State Correctional Institution at Dallas (SCID), simply for the cost of hauling it away. Each municipality generally gets 100-150 tons.

Area municipalities have formed a road materials purchasing cooperative, again to take advantage of lower prices for bulk orders.

Individual municipalities also have negotiated contracts with suppliers of anti-skid material, made from gravel or a mixture of sand, cinders and gravel.

These are all finite sources, dependent on the weather, demand and supply. As long as machinery isn't broken, trucks can run and storage piles aren't frozen solid, supplies get through.

January's snowstorms and cold weather have played havoc with salt deliveries, according to Molly Mangan, public relations assistant at Akzo Salt in Clarks Summit.

Akzo operates a salt distribution facility at the Buttonwood Yards in Wilkes-Barre and supplies road salt through the state piggyback program to many Luzerne County municipalities.

While the snowstorms blocked truck and rail shipments, the bitter cold froze rivers used by salt barges, Mangan said. And the price has increased due to higher transportation costs.

"This has been an outrageous year for salt," she said. "To date we have shipped more than 2.5 million tons of it. That's enough salt to take care of 25 million miles of roadway. Fortunately the break in the weather has allowed us to resupply."

The Buttonwood Yards received 13 railroad cars of salt February 7 and expected another 26 cars the next day, she said.

Conrail has made special arrangements, allowing Akzo to route entire trainloads of salt directly to the areas needing it most, bypassing other stops along the way, Mangan said.

Akzo has also arranged with its

salt mines in New York State to allow large customers to send their own trucks directly to the mines to pick up the precious material, instead of waiting for it to be delivered.

Barges from Akzo's salt plants in the Caribbean have also been sent to the Northeast, Mangan said.

Birthday bash

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girls and their children, to help Sr. Andre celebrate.

"I'm especially interested in the sisters' fundraisers to help women and children," she said. "I feel very connected to the sisters and their work. We talk a lot about helping the poor and feel that it mustn't be a sacrifice. It's important not to be grim about it - it's okay to have fun while helping out."

As Hession finished speaking, a conga line at least two dozen strong snaked through the room, between tables and chairs, to a Caribbean song. Sister Catherine McAuley would have been pleased.

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