



PERSONNEL



Accountability

Accountability is something that should apply to all levels of operations in regards to winter maintenance.

What this means is, there should be accountability at every level. Decisions about deployment, the number of personnel, the equipment used and how an agency will respond to an event are supervisory decisions.

These policy decisions along with decisions about the type of material to use, the amount of material to apply, the level of service to be achieved and the route cycle time are also supervisory or policy decisions.

Managers are held accountable for the decisions related to the planning of an event. It is an operator's duty to follow the decisions that have been made and to perform their operation safely. Understanding that each event is different is really important but varying from policy and not following recommended guidelines is not appropriate.

Operators that over-apply materials generally do so because they are trying to do a good job and provide a safe environment for roadway users but the long term implications of continued over-application must be considered too.

Both management and staff must have a successful plan in place and follow those guidelines to achieve the desired level of service.

In order to determine if a plan was successful and if operators followed the guidelines, measurements and accountability must be applied. This is especially important in situations where only small amounts of material are needed or in extreme situations where no salt is recommended.

Pre and post event meetings are vital for good communication and feedback. Data gathering and data review help determine if operators followed treatment recommendations and used the appropriate amount of material.

Contracted weather services and programs like a maintenance decision support system (MDSS) can aid managers and operators in determining how to approach an event, the conditions they faced during the event, the type of treatments needed, the outcomes of those treatments and the duration of the event.

The numbers: It is not easy to measure how much savings we could see from implementing an accountability plan, but management studies suggest there could be between a 10 to 50% improvement in performance, which in winter operations would translate to meeting our goals (our levels of service) with 10 to 50% less effort and less materials.

The Alternatives: On one level, accountability is just a word and there are other words out there that cover similar approaches (e.g. continuous improvement, quality circles, etc.). The key thing here is that, having set out goals and our methods to achieve those goals, we need to observe whether we are following our own procedures. It sounds simple, but change is always difficult, and without strong accountability, change will be slow and haphazard.

The needs: What do we need to be accountable? Clear goals are a must. Clear methods on how to achieve those goals are also vital. Finally, we need the measurements to tell us whether we are meeting our goals and what we are doing to meet those goals (are we doing what we should be doing). Finally, and perhaps hardest of all, we have to follow through on what the data tell us about our operations.



**Having plans is good.
Carrying out those
plans and being
accountable for them
being implemented is
even better.**

