

NDOT preps for winter storms

With a strong winter storm likely to hit the region on Sunday into Monday, the Nevada Department of Transportation is ready for whatever Mother Nature brings.

NDOT begins annual winter preparations in August by readying more than 80 snowplows and other pieces of snow and ice equipment for use in snow removal across northwestern Nevada.

More than 32,000 thousand cubic yards of salt and sand has been stockpiled, ready to be spread on winter roads for increased traction and safety. The sand is combined with salt and wetted with brine to create more dense sand that keeps roads ice-free at lower temperatures and will not as easily bounce off roadway surfaces. NDOT sand trucks calibrate the amount of salt and sand for precision and efficiency.

“Drivers will also see our NDOT vehicles spraying a liquid brine on the roads prior to certain storms,” NDOT Assistant District Engineer for Maintenance Mike Fuess said in a press release. “The brine is a solution of approximately 25 percent salt that we produce in-house at a substantial cost savings. Sprayed just before storms, the brine helps reduce how quickly the ice forms and sticks to the road.”

NDOT has 153 maintenance staff in northwestern Nevada. The department also has hired temporary winter maintenance personnel.

As storms move in, employees closely monitor meteorological forecasts detailing wind, rain, snow, ice and other weather on state roads. The updated weather readings help pinpoint precise sections of roads needing brine, salt and sand or snow removal.

During major winter storms, crews work in 12-hour shifts, rotating personnel to provide 24 hour-a-day snow removal.

NDOT has installed automatic anti-icing systems on four bridges on Interstate 580 between Reno and Carson City to help delay and prevent ice formation on bridge surfaces. When potentially freezing conditions set in, pavement sensors on each bridge activate spray disks embedded within the concrete. Each recessed disk sprays a potassium acetate anti-icing solution to help delay formation of ice.

NDOT will also use new tow plows on I-580 between south Reno and north Carson. The tow plow is a second, steerable snowplow blade towed like a trailer behind a traditional snowplow. The tow plow swings out to the lane next to the lead snowplow to clear a second lane of snow, saving an estimated \$78 per hour compared to a single plow.

On average, more than 2,000 crashes occur statewide every year due to unsafe driving in snow, ice and other wet conditions, such as driving too fast for conditions, following too closely, or failing to maintain a lane and overcorrecting.