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Cost savings expected

Oak Park to experiment with more environmentally friendly road salting approach

Aiming to reduce the impact of snow and ice removal on the environment and taxpayers wallets, the Village of Oak Park will test limiting salting primarily to main thoroughfares during the next few measurable snowfalls.

Village crews will continue to plow all residential streets and will salt all intersections, an approach that strives to slash by half the amount of melting agents sprayed onto parkway trees and vegetation, and eventually washed into the sewer system.

So far this season, Oak Park, like many area communities, has used much more salt and calcium chloride to melt snow and ice than was used last year. And if February 2008 is anything like February 2007, supplies of salt are sure to be tight and costs high as communities compete to restock their storage facilities.

Under the standard salting program, after a measurable snowfall Oak Park spreads about 800 pounds of salt for every lane of every mile of streets treated, an approach that costs the Village about \$200,000 each winter season. During the test period, salting will be reduced to 400 pounds for every lane of each mile of streets treated.

"Oak Park has a long history of aggressively treating all of its streets," said Public Works Director John Wielebnicki. "We want to see if we can keep traffic moving safely, while reducing salt and chemical treatments. Main roads and residential intersections will continue to be treated as usual."

Of course, drivers will need to be more careful on the plowed, but untreated residential streets. However, driving a little slower, increasing following distances and anticipating stops is a small price to pay if less tax money will be spent on snow-melting chemicals and fewer parkways suffer from the corrosive spray, Wielebnicki said.

For more information on the Village's snow removal program, call 358.5700 or e-mail publicworks@oak-park.us.

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