



TOWN OF UNION *Maine*

December was a busy month for the public works department. On the 1st, four of us attended a trenching and excavation class at Safety Works in Augusta. The four-hour class covered OSHA requirements, soil classifications, and different types of protective systems to prevent cave-ins and keep employees safe.

We had a mother of a teenage boy, who needed to complete some community service, reach out to the town and ask if there was anything he could do. The timing worked out well as I was able to set him up at the Common Cemetery with a leaf blower. He spent 10 hours over the course of four days in November and December, blowing leaves out of the cemetery and down to the edge of the road. When he was finished there was a monstrous pile of leaves that the crew was able to clean up with the loader and filled a dump truck six times.

We also had a lot of messy winter weather to attend to this month as well. The crew went out 12 times in the month of December, including on Christmas day. Most of the storms didn't amount to much accumulation but were just enough to cause slippery driving conditions. We lucked out on missing a significant ice/freezing rain event. Union is just close enough to the coast where we benefit from warmer temperatures (even if just a degree or two) where towns just a few miles further inland, like Washington, Liberty or Somerville don't get and end up with more ice than we do. Of the 12 events only one was a "major storm" where the crew was out for 21 hours. We only got four or five inches, but it was a long duration event which caused the extended hours. Four events were dirt road only events. When it rains, a dirt road instantly turns ice covered and needs to be attended to several times, whereas paved roads provide a barrier between the surface and the frost in the ground and retain radiant heat from traffic and the atmosphere which prevents them from icing up. Even without any inclement weather, dirt roads will become slick and need to be sanded just from traffic packing down the surface. Dirt roads really are the nemesis of public works as they cause the need for additional time and resources that otherwise wouldn't be necessary. And of course, after each event the guys will spend their next normal shift washing their trucks or at least spraying them down to get off as much of the salt residue as possible.

Looking at the long range forecast it appears that January is going to pick up where December left off. Luckily for the citizens of Union, their public works employees are dedicated professionals who pride themselves with providing the best possible service and safest roads all winter long.

Respectfully submitted,

Matt Elwell - Public Works Director



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Tom Fontaine washing his truck



A visit from Santa (aka Sherwood Hilt)