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Press Release

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[Bridges & Tunnels](#)

IMMEDIATE

Bridges and Tunnels Staff Ready to Meet Winter Weather Head-on

Winter is just around the corner and MTA Bridges and Tunnels is prepped and ready to go. The agency has more than 6,000 tons of roadway deicer, a fleet of 76 snow vehicles and hundreds of snow-trained employees ready for whatever the winter may have in store for the seven bridges and two tunnels it operates in New York City.

"We prepare for the worst and hope for the best," said MTA Bridges and Tunnels Chief Maintenance Officer Patrick Parisi, noting that there were only six "snow events" last winter. "The number one concern is the safety of our customers as they cross our facilities. Our employees are trained experts in dealing with hazardous conditions caused by snow, sleet, ice and hail on approach roads, toll plazas and traffic lanes."

Winter preparation begins in the spring, when all snow-related equipment is cleaned, oiled, and repaired as needed. The equipment goes through another maintenance check during the final weeks of summer to ensure it's ready for immediate use. Certain snow vehicles perform multiple tasks throughout the year, serving as safety back-up trucks during construction projects or maintenance work. Most of these vehicles can be easily converted to snow vehicles with plows and other equipment to handle the effects of a winter storm.

The material used to melt snow and ice on the agency's bridge and tunnel roadways—technically not salt—is an anti-corrosive deicer that has the melting power of regular salt. The deicer contains an additive that inhibits corrosion of structural steel on the agency's bridges. The deicer is stored in a large dome and must be rotated in order to break up any clumps that might interfere with proper spreading.

Climate-sensitive equipment, instrumentation and information also help crews tame the effects of winter precipitation. Weather detection systems on the facilities provide data not only about air temperature, moisture and wind velocity, but sensors embedded in the roadways also detect the temperature of the deck and the presence of moisture. This system can give early warning of a freezing condition, which can be prevented or reduced by de-icing the roadway deck before the buildup of ice and snow begins.

Prior to rolling out vehicles to manage snow or sleet conditions, facility personnel closely check all roadway areas for possible hazards; the requisite supply of gloves, safety goggles, ice choppers and shovels are kept on hand for maintenance crews, snow drivers and Bridge and Tunnel officers, all of whom are thoroughly briefed on procedures and potential weather scenarios, whether average or extreme.

Each facility has its own unique challenges. For example, the 72-year-old Robert F. Kennedy (formerly Triborough) Bridge has substantial area to monitor: three spans with multiple ramps—Manhattan, Bronx, Queens—a viaduct, pedestrian walkways and two toll plazas. The Bronx-Whitestone and especially the Throgs Neck are often hit with high winds coming off Long Island Sound; the Verrazano-Narrows, situated off the Atlantic coast at the mouth of New York Bay, can experience severe weather conditions that have an impact on roadways.

The spreading of deicer on roadways is an exercise in precision. Snow trucks have onboard computers that regulate and calculate the amount of deicer spread on a roadway. The flow is modified as the truck increases or decreases its speed to provide an even application. The system also determines the amount of deicer used so that inventories can be replenished efficiently and economically.

MTA Bridges and Tunnels facilities carry on average over 800,000 vehicles per day, with nearly 75% using E-ZPass. During inclement winter weather, traffic can decline by as much as 40%.

MTA Bridges and Tunnels' crossings, which connect the five boroughs of New York City, are the Throgs Neck, Bronx-Whitestone, Henry Hudson, Verrazano-Narrows, Robert F. Kennedy (formerly Triborough), Cross Bay Veterans Memorial and Marine Parkway-Gil Hodges Bridges and the Queens Midtown and Brooklyn-Battery Tunnels.



Maintenance crews spreading deicer to keep the roads clear on the upper deck of the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge during a February snow storm.