



MTA Press Releases

[Select Language](#) | ▼

Press Release

December 18, 2008

[NYC Transit](#)

IMMEDIATE

MTA NYC Transit Prepares To Keep Subways and Buses Working During Winter Weather

When the weather outside turns frightful... Well, that's when the city's mass transit system is needed most, and with the timely deployment of personnel and equipment, MTA New York City Transit's Departments of Subways and Buses follow well-established plans designed to keep the city's transit services up and running during even the worst winter storms.

"The subways and buses are indispensable to the city on an around-the-clock basis and we invest heavily in the resources needed to keep those services running, especially during severe winter weather," said NYC Transit President Howard H. Roberts, Jr. "Commuters depend on our services to get them out to work and back home again and we use everything from twenty-first century weather forecasting to ice picks and shovels to make certain that we don't disappoint them," added Roberts.

The Department of Subways maintains a fleet of snow and ice-busting equipment designed to keep outdoor tracks, switches and third rails clear of snow and ice. The fleet includes super-powered snow throwers, jet-powered snow-blowers, and de-icing cars ready for immediate deployment whenever there is a prediction of snowy weather.

Personnel in the Subway Rail Control Center and Bus Command Center continually monitor the U.S. National Weather Service and have direct access to a customized weather prediction service that provides regularly updated forecasts focusing on New York City. Adequate forewarning of a snow event allows adequate preparation times, allowing Transit to decide whether to hold workers after their shifts and bring others in prior to the beginning of their scheduled workday.

When heavy winter weather is in the forecast, New York City Transit is put on a foul weather footing, with the agency fine tuning the winter plan, and deploying employees and machines in order to keep subway and bus service operating as close to normal as possible.

While the subway portions of the system remain unaffected during snowstorms, there are nearly 220 miles of outdoor track throughout the four boroughs, and NYC Transit has heavy-duty equipment designed to move snow, melt ice and do anything else that must be done to maintain service during inclement weather. Subway lines such as the Rockaway, Sea Beach, Brighton and the Dyre Avenue segments, are particularly vulnerable to snow and freezing precipitation.

During a heavy snowstorm, such as the one that hit the city in 2006, tracks on outdoor subway lines must be cleared often, the third rails kept free of ice and outdoor steps at all 468 subway stations shoveled and salted. Elevated lines do not have the problem of snow build up as the flakes fall between the ties, but platforms and staircases still must be kept clear of snow and salted to melt ice, and it takes a small army of employees to accomplish this task. To prevent subway trains from being blocked in yards, they are moved and stored underground in anticipation of heavy snow or ice.

The Department of Buses has its own fleet of snow fighting equipment, including the plow-equipped, salt-spreading trucks assigned to each depot. They work in conjunction with the Department of Sanitation to keep heavily traveled bus routes clear and passable. Also, during heavy snowstorms the Department of Sanitation assigns a supervisor to the Bus Command Center as a liaison.

The Department of Buses deploys additional personnel to help keep bus stops clear of ice and snow and manpower and equipment are strategically placed to respond to any problems that buses may encounter on the road. Some bus models are equipped with chains and special attention is paid to hilly routes which could pose problems.

Subway Snow Fighting Equipment

Snow Throwers (four) – Precise directional snow throwing equipment. Includes a two- stage impeller and side-mounted rotating brushes to throw snow up to 200 feet and can remove 3,000 tons of snow an hour. This is similar to a household snow blower, just a lot bigger.

Jet Blowers (five) – This equipment uses a jet engine to remove accumulated snow from the roadbed and deposit it a distance from the tracks so that it cannot slide back. This piece of equipment is used primarily to keep the yards clear.

De-Icer Cars (six) – Equipped with scraper shoes that scrape off ice and also uses equipment to direct a stream of deicing fluid to melt and/or prevent ice buildup on the third rail. If ice is permitted to build up, subway car power pickup equipment will not be able to draw electric current from the third rail and the train will stop.

Ballast Regulator – Uses brush/broom to evenly sweep and push up snow onto an undercab conveyer and away from the track.

Rider Cars – Heated/Insulated work cars that can be used to carry crews and equipment to snow removal work sites. These cars are equipped with ice-scraping equipment to help keep the third rail clear.

Locomotives – All Diesel Locomotives are equipped with small snow plows at both ends to assist in scraping snow and ice off the road bed and transporting the other snow removal work cars. The locomotives are fitted with scraper shoes to remove ice.