



MTA Press Releases

[Select Language](#) | ▼

Press Release

May 12, 2009

[Bridges & Tunnels](#)

IMMEDIATE

Pothole Fix Is Fast Maneuver at MTA Bridges and Tunnels

It's pothole season again and MTA Bridges and Tunnels' maintenance crews are on alert and ready to pave them away as quickly and efficiently as possible at the agency's nine crossings.

So far this year maintenance crews have made more than 2000 pothole repairs using 6,000 gallons of liquid asphalt emulsion, 163 tons of stone aggregate, 26 tons of hot asphalt and 13 tons of cold patch mix.

"We consider our pothole patrol an important part of our customer service," said Patrick Parisi, Chief Maintenance Officer. "Once we spot them, we fill them as soon as possible, preferably during the off-peak traffic hours so there is less impact to customers, and always using a back-up truck for safety."

Freeze-and-thaw weather cycles help produce potholes when icy water and snow seep into concrete and asphalt, solidify then expand to cause cracks that widen into potholes as vehicles travel over them. Dramatic shifts in temperature can increase the potential for damage. Potholes are a nuisance on any road, but when they occur on bridges or at tunnel plazas there is less detour room for drivers to steer clear of them than there may be on streets or open roadways, so agency workers must act swiftly.

The more substantial potholes are dealt with by the Hot Box crews, named for the asphalt containers they use; the workers wield shovels and power tools to clear out and fill the gaps. A heavy roller vehicle is employed to smooth over holes that cover more than 100 square feet. Repair of the bigger potholes may require the closing of two lanes for on-the-ground crews to work in safety.

The crews alternate with the self-contained "Roadpatcher" truck, which employs a relatively quick yet effective and lasting method of pothole repair called spray-injection patching. This method requires only a driver to operate the vehicle and perform the repair via remote control, while a back-up truck trails in its wake to ensure safety and detour motorists around the work site. The truck has a nozzle-and-boom attachment at the front (*see photo*) that uses a high-volume blower to blast the pothole clean of debris and moisture. Next comes a filling of hot emulsion, then a mixture of asphalt. The final step is a covering layer of dry stone aggregate, after which traffic can begin to traverse immediately. During the process a single lane may be closed for safety. The Roadpatcher can fill up to 100 potholes in a single shift, with minimal disruption to traffic.

In keeping with other recent sustainability initiatives, for some of the Roadpatcher work the agency is testing out a "green" cold-mix asphalt that uses environmentally friendly solvents like plant oil to help fill potholes. According to Parisi: "We will analyze the results and see how it works for us. If it performs well, it would benefit our customers as well as the environment."

MTA Bridges and Tunnels nine facilities, which serve more than 830,000 daily customers and link the boroughs of New York City, are the Bronx-Whitestone, Verrazano-Narrows, Throgs Neck, Henry Hudson, Robert F. Kennedy (formerly Triborough), Cross Bay Veterans Memorial and Marine Parkway-Gil Hodges Memorial Bridges, and the Brooklyn-Battery and Queens Midtown Tunnels.



Photo caption: Roadpatcher truck taking care of potholes on a roadway lane at the Bronx-Whitestone Bridge.

