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Are You Ready?

Eastern Land Management takes a team approach to preseason preparations

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GETTING PREPARED

WINTER
2015

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FOR EASTERN LAND MANAGEMENT, IT'S ALL HANDS ON DECK AS ITS TEAM PREPARES FOR WINTER

BY CHERYL HIGLEY // Editorial Director

It's September and the Eastern Land Management (ELM) snow team is on the clock. The company is in the midst of a preseason preparation plan that began in August and is expected to be complete by November 1, which should leave plenty of breathing room before the first snowfall in the company's Westchester County, NY, and Fairfield County, CT market.

Getting ready for winter is a big task for ELM, which services commercial office buildings, apartment complexes, hotels, private schools and industrial parks for 150 clients. Contracts must be renewed, site plans designed, and equipment and materials ordered, prepped and allocated. The company also needs to prepare about 100 employees and subcontractors by educating them on safety, expectations, service levels and site logistics. It's a lot to prepare for, and companies that provide year-round service — like ELM — must accomplish all of these tasks as fall work continues.

"Fall is a busy time for us operationally. We try to manage all of the moving parts while thinking proactively that snow is coming," explains Bruce Moore Jr., vice president of operations. "It's very tough to balance that transition from green to white."

Step by step

Since his father Bruce Moore Sr. started the company in 1976, ELM has refined standard operating procedures to assist in the transition. Of utmost importance is identifying the date when everything should be ready to go, and then working backward to establish a starting date for preseason prep.

"We have a pretty good idea on when our first snowfall will be. Working back from that date, we determined our takeoff date for prep was August 10," Moore Jr. says, adding that every company's timeline will differ depending on market, company size, and the types and amount of equipment in the fleet.

Moore Jr. says the company's approach to preseason readiness changed after an October nor'easter in 2011.

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SNOW & ICE MANAGEMENT COMPANIES GET ONE CHANCE to make a great first impression when winter arrives. Getting ready for the season presents many logistical challenges and requires a lot of hard work. Companies who fail to plan for the winter most assuredly will face an uphill battle in keeping operations moving and clients satisfied. This special section features a few of the many tasks and processes that snow companies should work on as fall roars toward winter. Other resources, including last year's comprehensive Safety Issue, are available online at www.GoPlow.com and www.snowbusiness-digital.com.



SHIFTING TO SNOW

Equipment maintenance and installation is a key component in preseason readiness. Eastern Land Management's shop and equipment manager creates a timeline for the team to follow to ensure all equipment is prepped and ready to go by November 1.



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“Although preseason preparations were underway and the planning was on target, I had never experienced a storm of that significance so early in the year. Our clients still expected the same service as they would expect during a normal snow event. It made us really look into our preparations and planning to make sure we were ready for anything at any time.”

Piecing the puzzle together

Even though each department has its own preseason tasks to complete, everyone must be cognizant of their roles in the overall process.

To make sure everyone is on the same page, ELM will have a snow kickoff meeting near the end of August. Area managers, administrators and department leaders will walk through the whole preseason. Tasks are reviewed and assigned and deadlines set. Every two to three weeks after the teams gather for status updates.

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SOLID GAME PLAN

MONTH-BY-MONTH BENCHMARKS

MARCH 15

Typical end to ELM’s winter season. Company begins to transition to landscape operations. Shop and equipment manager begins preventive maintenance and storage for all winter equipment. Account managers follow up with clients to review performance, identify areas for improvement, and start the renewal process.

JUNE

Company begins process to procure rental equipment and ice management materials.

JULY

Fleet manager establishes a maintenance schedule for all equipment and orders any necessary parts.

AUGUST

Equipment prep begins. Contract administrators and area managers begin final push for contract renewals.

SEPTEMBER

Operations team starts site visits, begins planning routes and equipment allocation, and developing territories. Subcontractor pricing and agreements are finalized.

OCTOBER

Job site analysis and preseason inspections are completed.

NOVEMBER 1

ELM is ready for snow services.

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“Time management is crucial. If one department falls behind, it impacts the others since each department works together and our processes and procedures are intertwined,” explains Accounting Administrator Jessica Braz. “We try to stay on top of it by following up with each other and holding one another accountable.”

Align expectations

A key component to preseason readiness for ELM is customer communications. The first touchpoint actually comes right after the previous winter ends to determine what went well, what could have been done better, and to plant the seed for an early renewal. Contract management begins in earnest in August.

“It’s hard to get them to think about snow when it’s 80 degrees, but we need to educate them that it’s in their best interest to renew early,” says Richard

“No matter how prepared we think we are, that first storm will always be a little more hectic than the others. But a good preseason program can help control the chaos.”

—BRUCE MOORE JR.

Bevilacqua, senior area manager. “The worst thing is to have someone come to me in November and say they are ready to sign a contract. By then we’ve already allocated equipment and set our routes.”

Once the contract is signed, Bevilacqua requests a meeting with the property manager to walk the site, document any pre-existing damage, talk about concerns and priority zones, and outline expectations. He will also request permission to stage heavier equipment



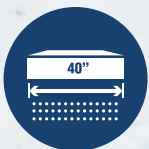
(From left) Vice President of Operations Bruce Moore Jr., Senior Area Manager Richard Bevilacqua, Accounting Administrator Jessica Braz and Shop & Equipment Manager Jake Czelada guide ELM’s preseason plans.

on-site early to cut down on mobilization time.

“We set the expectations early of what level of service they’re seeking and what they want from us. When the snow is falling and they have a different level of expectation, that’s a problem,” he says. “We want to communicate



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to them that we are ready for snow and that they have nothing to worry about. That communication will then continue throughout the season.”

Training for the season

Closer to winter ELM will host a snow operations meeting where everyone

involved in service delivery will review tasks and procedures for the year. The company also conducts a variety of training to get its team storm ready. ELM utilizes videos; peer learning, where veterans teach or supervise newer employees; site visits to review procedures;

and a “rodeo day,” where operators re-familiarize themselves with the equipment. The company also simulates real-world scenarios by using mulch as a snow substitute for plowing and shoveling.

“It’s been a real challenge getting field teams ready for snow in September and October. Even with all of our training, it’s hard for them to grasp an actual snowstorm,” Moore Jr. says. “When the snow comes, we’ve talked about it and trained for it. But when snow is coming down an inch an hour, it’s a whole different experience. No matter how prepared we think we are, that first storm will always be a little more hectic than the others. But a good preseason program can help control the chaos.” ❄

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