



# PLOWING IT FORWARD

*How Park City Municipal's snow removal staff keep the town moving, even in a blizzard*

It's been a banner snow year: by February 27, the city had received 157-percent of average snowfall. We love it on the slopes, but it can be challenging on the streets and sidewalks. This is where the city's intrepid snow removal crew comes in. PCMC's Streets & Parks Departments have been working—at times around the clock—to maintain safety and access for residents and visitors. Streets Manager Troy Dayley, Streets Supervisor Casey Coleman, and Streets & Parks Supervisor Ever Armendariz sat down to talk about just what happens to all that snow.

WE'VE HAD A LOT OF TWELVE-HOUR SHIFTS THIS WINTER, AND A LOT OF STAFF HAVE WORKED ON THEIR DAYS OFF, WHICH CAN TAKE A REAL TOLL ON FAMILIES. BUT OUR GUYS ARE DEDICATED TO THE JOB.

**Park City Municipal:** Your department needs to be ready at a moment's notice to respond to a snowstorm. How do you ensure immediate turnaround times?

**Troy Dayley:** We've developed a rigorous protocol that we adhere to throughout the winter. We check the weather every day—often

several times a day—and make sure to let the crew know they might be on the streets for the upcoming shift. As soon as the crew clocks in, each plow driver immediately does a pre-trip inspection.

**PCMC:** What does that entail?

**Casey Coleman:** It's a comprehensive inspection to make sure the vehicle—a truck and attached salter—can drive without fail for the next twelve hours. The driver checks everything, including the fluid levels, lug nuts, tire pressure, and strobes and mirrors.

**PCMC:** When do you send the trucks out?

**Troy:** As soon as the snow starts to stick to the roads—no matter how lightly. We usually send someone to Deer Valley right away since the snow accumulates faster at higher elevations.

**PCMC:** How many drivers go out at a time?



**Casey:** Each crew is made up of four drivers including the crew leader. We divide the town into four regions: Old Town; Deer Valley and Solamere; Aerie, Prospector, and some of Park Meadows; and Thaynes, Aspen Springs, and Park Meadows.

**PCMC:** Take us through the strategy for tackling your respective areas.

**Ever Armendariz:** Each driver makes at least one pass through, which takes about an hour-and-a-half to two hours. During a snowstorm, we plow the priority one streets (school and city bus routes) over and over again, then work into priority two and three streets.

**PCMC:** How long is each shift?

**Troy:** The shifts start at 4:00 p.m. and 4:00 a.m. (which means the day shift staff are getting called at 2:30 a.m. letting them know they're on) and run ten-to-twelve hours, based on snowfall. We've had a lot of twelve-hour shifts this winter, and a lot of staff have worked their days off, which can take a real toll on families. But our guys are dedicated to the job. We would just like folks to know that it doesn't happen by magic: there's a lot of sacrifice.

**PCMC:** And how does each shift wind up?

**Ever:** Once we return to Public Works, we fuel up the truck, clean out any garbage, replenish the salt, and pass the baton to the next operator. The cycle continues until the snow stops and

the town is "open," which is defined as every road being passable. Once the snow has let up, we turn to widening and hauling the snow.

**PCMC:** What is typically the craziest time of the snow season?

**Troy:** The Sundance Film Festival, without a doubt. The event load-in and load-out and the sheer number of people necessitate that we work around the clock before, during, and after the

festival. We especially have to make sure all of the parking lots—including the contingency lot at Richardson Flats—are open. This year, we also had two snowstorms during the festival—not to mention the Women's March on Main—so we were stretched to capacity.

**PCMC:** What are the most challenging elements of snow removal?

**Casey:** Old Town is a particular challenge, especially during Sundance. It might take half-an-hour just to plow Main Street during the festival because there are so many people. I



need to stay really alert because people who aren't used to snow sometimes inadvertently walk out in front of the plow.

**PCMC:** What can residents do to help out?

**Ever:** The number-one thing folks can do is move their garbage cans away from the curb, especially in Old Town. I know the short-term renters might be unaware that they need to do this, so we'd ask the homeowners to make sure this happens. The next biggest thing is moving your car off the street. Parked cars are a real impediment to plowing. The plow driver tries pretty hard to contact the owners, but it's very time-consuming, and eventually the car might get towed. Of course we feel bad whenever that happens, but if we can't fit our plow through, a fire truck or emergency vehicle wouldn't fit either.

**Casey:** One time I was stuck on Ontario Avenue—unable to go forward or backward—because of a parked car. It took almost an hour to contact the car's owner and have them move their car. We'd like to avoid these situations because they aren't good for the residents, the taxpayers, or the plow drivers.

**Troy:** The last thing we ask is that residents not shovel snow out into the street. When clearing your driveway, always put it in your yard. Homeowners usually have good snow-removal etiquette, but third-party contractors often clear snow into the street, even though they know it's their responsibility to shovel it onto the yard or haul it away.

**PCMC:** The plow crewmen are the unsung heroes of the town, but do you sometimes feel misunderstood?

**Troy:** The biggest complaint we get is about plowing snow into people's driveways. We'd like folks to know we don't do this on purpose, but it's nearly impossible for us to straighten out the plow angle for every driveway then turn it to the curb again. We'd never get the streets plowed in time. Once the snow has stopped, and we come back to do widening and cleanup, we take the time and try not to fill driveways. But in the thick of the storm, our first priority is to keep the roads clear.

**PCMC:** Everyone really appreciates having clear roads, but some people worry about all that salt ending up in the water system. Have you considered using sand like some municipalities?

**Troy:** Every system has a downside. We're prohibited from using sand because of the



*Parks Employee Francisco Leon shovels the stairs leading to China Bridge.*

federal storm water regulation under which Park City is classified (the sediment could be harder on the fish than the salt.) But we try to keep the salt distribution to a bare minimum by calibrating our salters very precisely. We're also moving toward a salt-brine system: the brine is made up of a little bit of salt and a lot of water. As we retire old equipment, we're outfitting the new trucks to be compatible with this technology. Once the system is fully up and running, we anticipate a 30-percent reduction in salt over the course of a season.

**PCMC:** What happens once the snow stops?

**Troy:** Once the snow starts to melt, we need to switch gears pretty quickly to prevent flooding. We start preparing sandbags early in the year, making sure we have everything in place by peak flows, which are typically at the end of May. The warmer temperatures of a few weeks ago actually melted a lot of the base snowfall, which will hopefully mitigate the risk. But with this recent bout of storms—and with whatever March brings—we'll still need to be vigilant.

*To learn more about proper snow etiquette or how to report an issue, visit the [winter operations](#) page on the city's website. You can also watch this [ride-along with a snow-plow](#) on Fox 13.*



### **The Plow Crew**

**front row (l-r):** Bill Connell, Tom Tuckey, Nick Theiss, Ever Armendariz, Matt Houston

**second row (l-r):** Kory Atkinson, Genaro Armendariz, Giovanni Payan, Worth Cropp, Kurt Thomas, Frank Byer, Stewart Smith

**third row (l-r):** Casey Coleman, Troy Dayley, Garrett Crystal

**back row (l-r):** Jared Smith, Luis Solano