



FACT SHEET - 2007 SPRING HIGHWAY CONDITIONS

Why are there so many potholes and surface breaks?

- Potholes and surface breaks are a fact of life every spring on city streets, municipal roads and highways.
- Potholes and surface break-ups on highways are predicted to be well above average this spring due to excessive amounts of spring runoff and a wet fall.
- The wet fall means any open pavement cracks would have allowed moisture to seep into roadbeds, which in some areas were saturated going into freeze up.
- Potholes are formed from the expansion and contraction of water that has entered into the subsurface of the road through cracks in the pavement.
- When water freezes it expands. This causes the pavement to expand, bend or crack and weakens the road. When the ice melts, the pavement contracts leaving voids in the subsurface where water can get in again.
- If the water freezes and thaws over and over, the road can become very weak.
- Saskatchewan Watershed Authority is predicting well above normal spring run off potential for a significant portion of the province.
- Highways in these areas will be closely monitored as temperatures warm.

Which highways will be most impacted?

- Some paved highways are more vulnerable in the spring than others.
 - Older and cracked roads will allow more water into the subgrade.
 - Roads with lower grades will stay saturated longer until melt water has dried up and the road has had a chance to dry.
- Thin Membrane Surface (TMS) roads can be very sensitive to break up in the spring.
 - These highways do not have the same structural strength as paved highways.
 - The performance of these roads is very dependant on the way the spring thaw occurs. If there are a lot of freeze thaw cycles, more surface breaks are expected.
 - If large volumes of melt water take a long time to recede, more surface breaks are expected.
 - If loaded commercial trucks travel over TMS roads that have a saturated subgrade, more surface breaks are expected.
 - The more trucks travel on a road when the subsurface is in a weakened state the more damage will occur to the road.

What is being done to fix them?

- Road repair materials have been ordered and stockpiled.
- The department spent \$5 million in December to top up gravel stockpiles to ensure material is available at the right locations for anticipated road repairs.
- Road crew supervisors throughout Saskatchewan have their maintenance management plans ready for the 2007 season.
- Spring road work has begun already in some parts of the province.
- Equipment is being prepared for a busy season.
- Crews from drier areas of the province may be called upon to assist in flooded areas.
- Spring road bans and temporary weight restrictions are in place to prevent damage.

How soon will repairs be made?

- When surface breaks occur in the spring, highway crews flag the hazard and do an assessment of what kind of repair is needed.
- The crew may apply gravel material or blade on asphalt patching material as a temporary repair.
- Small potholes will be filled with patching material.
- These types of repairs may only temporarily fix the problem.
- Crews **MUST** wait until the road dries before attempting long term repairs.
- Highways that require large permanent repairs will be scheduled into the summer work plan for the crew.
- This spring, the priority for crews will be to clear culverts, maintain drainage runs and direct traffic through or around flood zones.
- As soon as critical flooding and high moisture areas are addressed and roadbeds dry out, permanent repairs on other highways will begin.
- Crews prioritize their work by highway classification.
- Repairs on the most heavily-travelled highways will be scheduled first.

For the latest spring road conditions, contact the Highway Hotline:



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