

FEBRUARY 2021

THE GUARDIAN

- Official Newsletter of MSU Tower Guard -

This Month in MSU History

2/3/1942 - Taking a date to the Union Grill for a Coke became routine at MSU. However, on Feb. 3, 1942, the Union manager announced that no more Cokes would be served due to the sugar shortage caused by WWII.

2/7/1901 - The first dairy building was dedicated.

2/7/2014 - Pres. Obama visits MSU to sign the Farm Bill.

2/11/1965 - Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. lectures at MSU, drawing a crowd of 4,000+.

2/12/1855 - Agriculture College of Michigan was founded.

2/12/2020 - Mel Tucker announced as the new head football coach.

Birthdays

2/2 - Jeremiah Hutson

2/4 - Zoe Dunnum (Sergeant-at-Arms)

2/5 - Taylor Chambers

2/22 - Danielle Goldberg

2/27 - Joseph Noonan

Winter Challenges for People with Disabilities

SIRI NICOL, PR CHAIR / WEBMASTER

The first snowfall of the winter season is an exciting time for most people. They look forward to various snow activities, including sledding, skiing, or hiking. However, for people with disabilities, winter can be a scary thing. It can mean 3 to 4 months of isolation and uncertainty. Journalist Spencer Williams, who uses a power wheelchair himself, writes about his experience with snow. He says, "Snow might be lovely for some, but for people with disabilities, it can be an immobilizing force, rendering us trapped, unable to enjoy the winter wonderland and be sociable like everyone else". Their life comes to a complete standstill, and they must wait until it is safe for them to venture outside. And when they do decide to go outside, the snow can cause immense difficulties. For one, the snow can cause a wheelchair to get stuck or lose traction (Williams, 2017). Forbes Magazine continues on by saying that simple tasks such as navigating sidewalks can cause great difficulty for wheelchairs and mobility scooters when faced with snow. People who use a cane or walker must walk with trepidation, for even the smallest patch of ice or snow can be life threatening. For disabled people who drive, they must face challenges such as losing their accessible parking rights due to their designated spaces being piled up with snow, slipping on driveways when attempting to get in and out of the vehicle, and snow-blocked ramps and entryways into buildings. For blind individuals, snowfall makes it impossible for them to know where danger points may be and whether their normal routes will be available or not (Pulrang, 2019). Williams explains that the drop in temperature can cause muscles to stiffen up, making it troublesome for people who already struggle with their mobility. Therefore, when snow isn't properly cleared, people with disabilities are resigned to stay indoors until it is safe to venture outside (Williams, 2017). (Continued on page 2)



Forbes adds that packed snow is even worse since it freezes into layers of thick ice that cover large sections of sidewalk and is practically impossible to remove. Unfortunately, most people have a bias for drivers over pedestrians, clearing roads long before they make an effort (if any) to clear sidewalks. Forbes states that “keeping sidewalks clear is widely regarded as an individual moral issue, rather than as a collective civic responsibility”. So, what can we do? For one, we can assist in clearing sidewalks, ramps, and other public pathways. We also can offer to help a disabled individual shovel after a storm hits (Pulrang, 2019). By taking the time to clear the sidewalks in front of your house, you can be a part of making your community safer and more accessible for all.

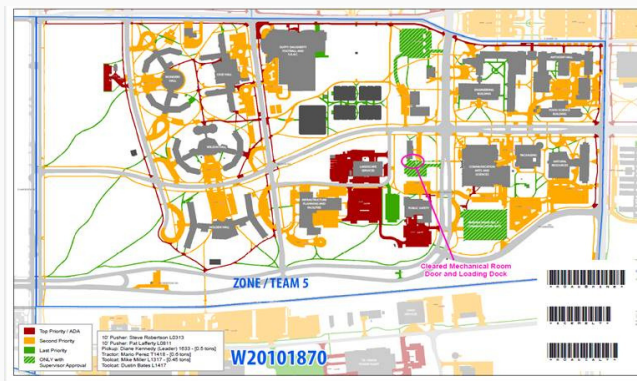
Through writing this article, I grew curious about MSU’s procedures around snow removal and winter accessibility. I contacted Matt Bailey, Landscape Services Manager at MSU Infrastructure Planning and Facilities, with some general inquiries on this subject. Below is the interview transcript:

Siri: I was wondering if MSU has any special protocols for clearing sidewalks and making campus more accessible?

Matt: My team works directly with RCPD well before the start of the winter season to get feedback on the past season snow issues, identifying hot spots or areas of concern. We also get a list of all students with disabilities, pinpointing where they are staying on campus and their normal paths to get to classes. With this information, we generate and prioritize these routes with our snow removal teams.

S: Are there specific times in the day when paths are cleared? Are some paths prioritized over others?

M: In the winter we move our staff to an earlier shift so that we can get ahead of any winter issues that arise overnight. We also break our entire team up into 3 Emergency Response Teams that will respond to winter related issues after-hours or on weekends when it doesn’t warrant an all staff snow push. We prioritize ADA routes (in red), events, student dorms, and cafeterias. See map below. At the bottom corner of the map there is a prioritization key with red being top priority and green being low priority.



S: Is there an alert system for students that notifies them of which routes have been cleared?

M: We work closely with DPPS, who have a student alert system that we can request alerts to be sent out if there is a snow emergency.

(Continued on page 3)

"As Spartans,
leadership is
embedded in our
DNA."

AUTHOR UNKNOWN

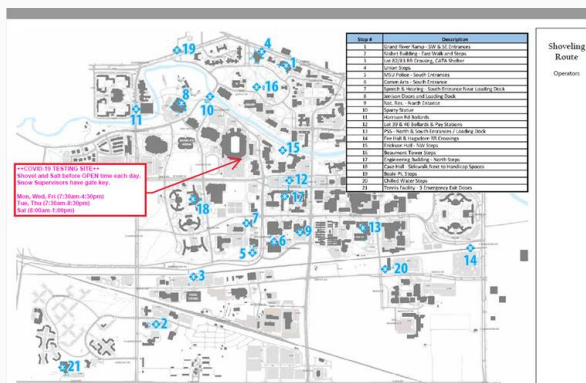




We hope to introduce a snow dashboard in the next few years that would inform campus customers what routes have been recently plowed and what routes on campus are currently the safest.

S: Are there bigger challenges in ensuring that building steps are slip-free?

M: The steps on campus are shoveled in collaboration with RHS, Custodial Services, and Landscape Services. RHS and Custodial Services shovel all entrances up to a point where we can access with equipment. For all stairs that are on general campus buildings, our staff shovels and monitors daily. Some of the less used stairwells on campus are shut down so that we can focus the majority of our effort on more readily used areas. Stairs are always more difficult, but we have many different types of hand held equipment that help us be as efficient as possible. See map below, which indicates the important buildings/areas to shovel.



S: Is there anything that the Spartan community can do to assist?

M: There are several things that can be done by any Spartan.

- To report an area in need of snow or ice removal, call 355-1855
- Employees are encouraged to park in the parking ramps
- Work with snow-removal experts to ensure your safety. Avoid darting out in front of or behind snow-removal equipment, and make eye contact with a snow-removal driver before crossing the street in front of them.
- On sidewalks: Avoid parking so close to the sidewalk that causes your car's bumper to hang over the sidewalk. This creates an obstacle for snow-removal equipment
- In parking lots: Park in the plowed areas of parking lots to help snow-removal workers quickly clear the unplowed areas without navigating around vehicles
- In residence hall loops: Parking is prohibited in these loops between 2 a.m. and 6 a.m. to allow snow-removal workers time to clear them
- Regarding bikes: avoid chaining bikes to signs. It is illegal on campus and creates obstacles for snow-removal equipment
- Regarding ice-melt compound: give it some time to take effect. Also, while safety is priority one, using ice-melt compounds responsibly is important to limit negative environmental impacts.

I would like to formally thank Matt Bailey for taking the time to share his insights with the Tower Guard community. I hope this article shed some light on a subject that is so commonly overlooked, widening our perspective to make MSU a more inclusive and safe campus.

Works Cited

- Pulrang, A. (2019, December 07). We Can Do Better On Winter Weather Accessibility. Retrieved January 28, 2021, from <https://www.forbes.com/sites/andrewpulrang/2019/12/06/we-can-do-better-on-winter-weather-accessibility/sh=5345ffb6c6e2>
- Williams, S. (2017, February 12). Winter Sucks When You Have a Disability. Retrieved January 28, 2021, from <https://www.vice.com/en/article/787559/winter-sucks-when-you-have-a-disability>