

On March 30, 1992, after Syracuse, N.Y., had seen record snowfall in excess of 162.5 inches for the 1991-1992 winter season, the Syracuse Common Council unanimously approved the following resolution:

“Be it resolved, on behalf of the snow-weary citizens of the city of Syracuse, any further snowfall is expressly outlawed in the city of Syracuse until December 24, 1992.”

Though this resolution gave no power against the weather, as two more inches of snow fell on the city two days later, it did provide humor that helped residents make it to spring.

The next winter was the snowiest ever—192.2 inches of the white stuff blanketed the town.

There are places nationwide that get more snow, but among America’s cities with populations greater than 100,000, Syracuse’s snowfall is supreme. Yes, there are years when Buffalo and Rochester do better, but if you want to bet on it, put your money on Syracuse. An average year finds total accumulation of 115.6 inches covering this city, which is 25.6 square miles and home to approximately 150,000 residents.

In good economic times and bad, snow is a fact of life for Central New Yorkers. If the snow is not moved off the streets—and fast—life would come to a halt here. How do they do it? They push it aside with plows, cart it away with dump trucks and melt it with salt—just like they’ve been doing for 100 years. And when necessary, they do it around the clock every day.

The only place you’ll see things done a bit differently is at Syracuse Hancock International Airport. There, due to Federal Aviation Administration regulations, salt is forbidden on the runways. To keep from breaking the lights imbedded in the tarmac, small wheels mounted under the plows keep those plows just off the ground. The airport also has giant sweepers and snow blowers, which wouldn’t work on city streets.

Let’s face it, if you need to move a lot of snow, you’ll need a lot of good equipment. But you’ll also need a lot of hearty people who are willing to go out there and get it done. Syracuse, thank goodness, has both. **G**

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SNOW

Story and photographs by **David Kidd**



Snow plow driver Eduardo “Paco” Huertas, left, stands with his wingman, Stanley Gardynski, who operates the side-mounted plow, Jan. 9, 2010.

JOB

Right: Newly-elected Mayor Stephanie Miner shows off the latest addition to the city's fleet. The truck was on display at her outdoor inauguration ceremony in early January. Below: A crew of welders and mechanics is kept busy repairing damaged equipment and keeping the plows on the road. Bottom: The airport has a number of specialized snow removal vehicles. Despite the amount of snow that falls, runway closures are a rare occurrence.



Left: Though it's known as the Salt City, Syracuse imports its road salt from Lansing, 50 miles to the south. In 2009 the city used nearly 41,000 tons to combat 149 inches of snow. Below left: Operating heavy equipment in dangerous conditions can sometimes lead to accidents. This plow slid down an icy hill and snapped a telephone pole, trapping the driver and wingman in a tangle of live power lines. Neither was injured. Below right: John Ostune enjoys a few minutes of warmth before heading out into the freezing weather.



Right: crewleader Rich DeMarzo hands out assignments for the night. Below: The city of Syracuse may be under a foot or more of snow, but the citizens expect their roads to be clear. Bottom left: The driver and wingman perform routine checks of their equipment before heading out. Bottom right: If there is snow and ice on the streets, 23-year veteran Mike Politis is going to take care of it.

