

In 2014, Michigan endured one of its harshest winters on record.

In early January, a particularly nasty storm hit the state –
basically shutting it down for several days.

The Michigan Department of Transportation used social media, particularly Facebook, to engage the public and keep them informed about winter maintenance activity, as well as to provide safety tips to make sure everyone made it home safe.

www.facebook.com/MichiganDOT



2014 Winter Social Media Response



Michigan Department of Transportation

January 3

Good morning MDOTers!

Brrrrr. That's really the word of the day (or week, at this rate).

Here are some interesting facts to remember when it comes to MDOT winter maintenance:

- MDOT direct forces have about 300 winter maintenance vehicles, which are almost exclusively combination plow/salt trucks.
- Contract agencies for state roads have about 900 more vehicles for winter maintenance.
- MDOT direct forces maintain about 25 percent of Michigan roads (which comes out to about 9,651 routes miles, or 27,436 lane miles).

So the next time you're wondering where the plow trucks are, just remember - they have a lot of ground to cover and they just aren't where you happen to be at that moment 😊

With it being so cold, don't forget to pack some emergency supplies in your vehicle just in case you get stuck somewhere. Extra boots, clothing, gloves, a shovel, kitty litter, water, food, etc. can go a long way to helping you deal with a bad situation and hopefully get you un-stuck.

Be safe out there and remember to drive to conditions. Happy Friday!

Like · Comment · Share

11 12 2 Shares

2,029 people reached

Boost Post

Jan. 3, 2014

Even before the big Jan. 5 storm hit, temperatures already were extremely cold.

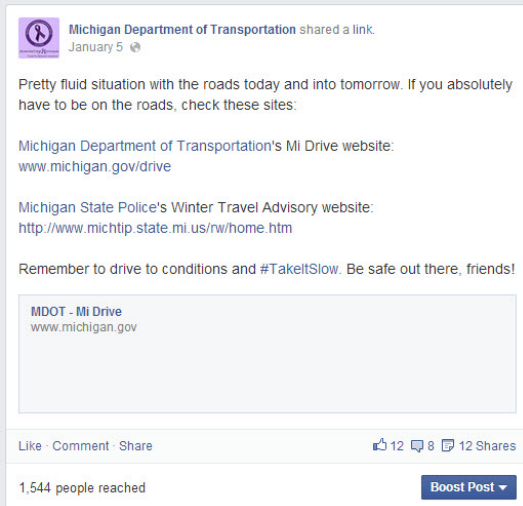
MDOT posted safety tips and a friendly reminder of the kind of resources the department dedicates to winter maintenance.


2014 Winter Social Media Response

Jan. 5, 2014

Then the big storm hit on Sunday, Jan. 5.

Even though it was the weekend (or “after hours”), MDOT employees kept engaged with the public, reminding them about the resources at their disposal to make informed travel decisions and be safe.



 Michigan Department of Transportation shared a link.
January 5 · 🌐

Pretty fluid situation with the roads today and into tomorrow. If you absolutely have to be on the roads, check these sites:

Michigan Department of Transportation's Mi Drive website:
www.michigan.gov/drive

Michigan State Police's Winter Travel Advisory website:
<http://www.michtip.state.mi.us/rw/home.htm>

Remember to drive to conditions and #TakeItSlow. Be safe out there, friends!

MDOT - Mi Drive
www.michigan.gov

Like · Comment · Share

👍 12 💬 8 📄 12 Shares

1,544 people reached

Boost Post ▼



2014 Winter Social Media Response

Jan. 6, 2014



Michigan Department of Transportation

January 6

And this isn't really transportation-related (well, horseriding counts), but if you have animals outside, please do what you can to keep them warm.

Like · Comment · Share

63 2 2 Shares

2,674 people reached

Boost Post



Michigan Department of Transportation

January 6

It's extremely cold, it's windy, it's snowy - and now it's dark. If you don't have to be anywhere tonight, it's best to stay home. Be safe, everyone!

Like · Comment · Share

78 6 24 Shares

3,536 people reached

Boost Post

On Monday, Jan. 6, the storm had gotten so dangerous that schools, colleges, businesses, and even state government told their people to stay home. This was the first time in recent memory that the State of Michigan was closed due to dangerous weather.

Despite being home, MDOT employees remained engaged with the public on social media, providing safety reminders not only for themselves but also their furry friends.




2014 Winter Social Media Response




Jan. 7 - 9, 2014

With the storm affecting nearly the whole state for almost the entire week (even extending most schools' winter breaks by several days), a healthy dose of humor every now and then helped to liven the mood.



Michigan Department of Transportation shared a link.
January 9

Michigan's in there... somewhere.



"Whiteout" Over Great Lakes Seen from Space (Photo)
www.livescience.com

The five Great Lakes, in all their glory, barely peak out from the veil of clouds and whooshing snowfall above them in a new satellite image captured Monday (Jan. 6) as the Arctic's polar vortex barreled southward.

Like · Comment · Share
49 1 21 Shares

1,128 people reached

Boost Post



Michigan Department of Transportation
January 7

Be careful on your way home tonight. Taun tauns - er, deer - may be on the move. 😊

Like · Comment · Share
29 1 14 Shares

2,133 people reached

Boost Post

2014 Winter Social Media Response



Michigan Department of Transportation

January 8 · 🌐

Good morning, MDOTers!

It's still cold outside, so that means roads are still slick. Crews are doing everything they can to clear the roads of snow and ice but salt usage is pretty much out of the question until temps get back above freezing. If crews throw down salt now it would simply melt the snow and ice and then immediately refreeze - causing more ice, not to mention wasting money on salt (which, as we all know, is a pretty big chunk of the MDOT maintenance budget).

Certain areas don't lend themselves to sand usage for a few reasons. The number one problem is drainage. Eventually that snow and ice will melt, and if there's a good amount of sand in the mix that can be a real problem for that area's drainage, gutters, etc. Certain areas of the state do lend themselves to using sand, and crews in those areas do use it where practical and safe.

Hopefully this clears up some questions about what the plow operators are doing to clean up the roads. Until there's bare pavement to drive on again, slow down, follow Michigan's Basic Speed Law, and get home safe 😊

Happy Wednesday!

Like · Comment · Share

👍 60 💬 8 🔄 57 Shares

5,236 people reached

Boost Post ▼

Jan. 8, 2014

As the storm cleanup continued, certain questions and complaints about sand and salt usage began to pop up.

MDOT took the opportunity to address these questions in a general Facebook post for the benefit of all followers.

It was shared 57 times, helping the post gain a reach of more than 5,000 people on Facebook alone.

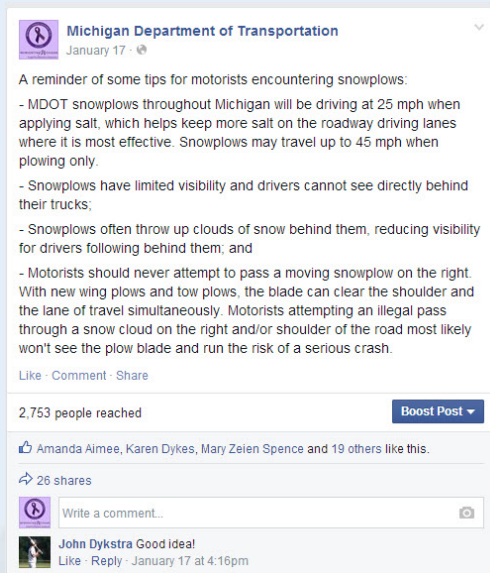


2014 Winter Social Media Response

Jan. 17, 2014

The massive storm cleanup also provided an opportunity to remind motorists about safely sharing the road with snowplows.

This was especially important as crashes involving state and local snowplows began to mount as winter rolled on.



Michigan Department of Transportation
January 17 · 🌐

A reminder of some tips for motorists encountering snowplows:

- MDOT snowplows throughout Michigan will be driving at 25 mph when applying salt, which helps keep more salt on the roadway driving lanes where it is most effective. Snowplows may travel up to 45 mph when plowing only.
- Snowplows have limited visibility and drivers cannot see directly behind their trucks;
- Snowplows often throw up clouds of snow behind them, reducing visibility for drivers following behind them; and
- Motorists should never attempt to pass a moving snowplow on the right. With new wing plows and tow plows, the blade can clear the shoulder and the lane of travel simultaneously. Motorists attempting an illegal pass through a snow cloud on the right and/or shoulder of the road most likely won't see the plow blade and run the risk of a serious crash.

Like · Comment · Share

2,753 people reached **Boost Post** ▼

👍 Amanda Aimee, Karen Dykes, Mary Zeien Spence and 19 others like this.

🔄 26 shares

💬 Write a comment...

John Dykstra Good ideal
Like · Reply · January 17 at 4:16pm


2014 Winter Social Media Response




Jan. 28, 2014

MDOT's popular Pic of the Day feature on Facebook provided images from around the state people otherwise wouldn't see – helping to keep the entire winter season in perspective.

This was especially helpful in showing MDOT's followers what kind of snowfall remote areas in the Upper Peninsula had to endure.

**Michigan Department of Transportation**
January 28 · 🌐

This is the north side of Calumet (Houghton County) on M-203. And how big are your snowbanks? Share your photos! 😊 — in Calumet, MI.



Like · Comment · Share · Tag Photo

👍 74 💬 10 📄 298 Shares

15,600 people reached

Boost Post ▼



2014 Winter Social Media Response



Michigan Department of Transportation
February 7 · 🌐

Good morning MDOTers!

As we all know, this winter has been a particularly brutal one for Michigan. Now we're starting to see just how much it is affecting the bottom line.

Salt usage:

- October - December 2011 = 76,520 tons
- October - December 2012 = 99,315 tons
- October - December 2013 = 228,686 tons (130% increase from last year - even with a few counties still gathering info)

Salt costs:

- October - December 2011 = \$1.9 million
- October - December 2012 = \$2.5 million
- October - December 2013 = \$5.7 million (123% increase from last year)

Liquid usage:

- October - December 2011 = 325,170 gallons
- October - December 2012 = 341,136 gallons
- October - December 2013 = 904,559 gallons (165% increase from last year)

Sand usage:

- October - December 2011 = 10,910 tons
- October - December 2012 = 10,885 tons
- October - December 2013 = 44,600 tons (310% increase from last year)

If you notice, the current year numbers are only through this past December. The major storms we've dealt with in January aren't even figured into these amounts 🙄

What does this mean overall? Well, winter maintenance (plowing, salting, etc.) and summer maintenance (mowing, clearing trash & debris) come from the same portion of MDOT's budget. This means that the more spent on winter maintenance, the less money will be available for summer road maintenance.

Safety is always the top priority, so if tall grass along a highway is posing a safety problem this summer then it will be dealt with, no matter what. However, if the tall grass is simply unattractive, then it may not be mowed

as quickly as normal due to limited funding. Unfortunately, that's just how much of an impact this tough winter is going to have on Michigan for the entire year.

Like · Comment · Share

5,096 people reached Boost Post

👍 Betsy Ross, Brenda Hopson, Patrice Scullion Johnson and 21 others like this.

🔗 64 shares

💬 Write a comment...

👤 Mikejosie Foster I drive a semitruck over night and would like to sa big thank you for the work your doing. People don't realize the great amount of snow that's fall.

Unlike · Reply · 📌 4 · February 7 at 11:19am

👤 Michigan Department of Transportation Thanks, we'll be sure to pass along your message to our crews. They'll appreciate it!

Like · February 7 at 11:51am

💬 Write a reply...

👤 Jason Burleson As a truck driver I have to ask how difficult would it be to designn a semi truck with a plow on the front of it

Like · Reply · February 11 at 7:08am

👤 Michigan Department of Transportation Not quite sure. We engineer roads and bridges, not vehicles 🙄

Like · February 11 at 8:12am

💬 Write a reply...

👤 John Valenti Any chance the governor can just declare a state of emergency and dip into some federal funds , like Georgia as they cope with their inch of snow this year?

Like · Reply · 📌 2 · February 10 at 2:21pm · Edited

👤 Michigan Department of Transportation Hi John - Governor Rick Snyder could better answer that for you.

Like · 📌 1 · February 10 at 2:50pm

Feb 7, 2014

As MDOT began to assess the financial toll the brutal winter was taking on its overall maintenance budget, MDOT remained engaged with public to be as transparent as possible.

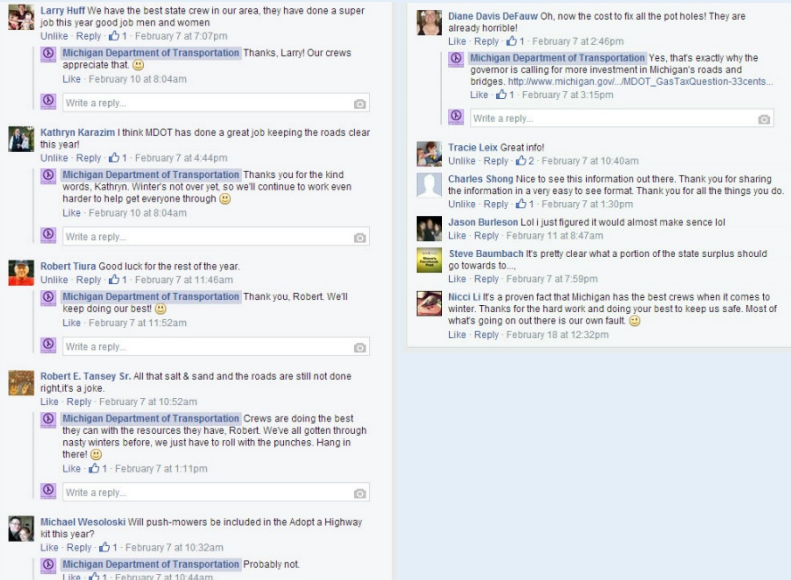
This provided the public with a clear view of the work MDOT was doing for them, and various followers showed their appreciation.

2014 Winter Social Media Response

Feb 7, 2014

The public also thanked MDOT for keeping them informed throughout each storm.

Because of this constant public engagement and the valuable information shared, MDOT gained more Facebook followers during the 2013-2014 winter (+1,579) than the previous three winters combined (+1,401).



Larry Huff We have the best state crew in our area, they have done a super job this year good job men and women
 Unlike · Reply · 1 · February 7 at 7:07pm

Michigan Department of Transportation Thanks, Larry! Our crews appreciate that 😊
 Like · February 10 at 8:04am

Kathryn Karazim I think MDOT has done a great job keeping the roads clear this year!
 Unlike · Reply · 1 · February 7 at 4:44pm

Michigan Department of Transportation Thanks you for the kind words, Kathryn. Winter's not over yet, so we'll continue to work even harder to help get everyone through 😊
 Like · February 10 at 8:04am

Robert Tiura Good luck for the rest of the year.
 Unlike · Reply · 1 · February 7 at 11:46am

Michigan Department of Transportation Thank you, Robert. We'll keep doing our best! 😊
 Like · February 7 at 11:52am

Robert E. Tansey Sr. All that salt & sand and the roads are still not done right! It's a joke.
 Like · Reply · February 7 at 10:52am

Michigan Department of Transportation Crews are doing the best they can with the resources they have, Robert. We've all gotten through nasty winters before, we just have to roll with the punches. Hang in there! 😊
 Like · 1 · February 7 at 1:11pm

Michael Wesoloski Will push-mowers be included in the Adopt a Highway kit this year?
 Like · Reply · 1 · February 7 at 10:32am

Michigan Department of Transportation Probably not.
 Like · 1 · February 7 at 10:44am

Diane Davis Defauw Oh, now the cost to fix all the pot holes! They are already horrible!
 Like · Reply · 1 · February 7 at 2:46pm

Michigan Department of Transportation Yes, that's exactly why the governor is calling for more investment in Michigan's roads and bridges. http://www.michigan.gov/_MDOT_GasTaxQuestion-33cents...
 Like · 1 · February 7 at 3:15pm

Tracie Leix Great info!
 Unlike · Reply · 2 · February 7 at 10:40am

Charles Shong Nice to see this information out there. Thank you for sharing the information in a very easy to see format. Thank you for all the things you do.
 Unlike · Reply · 1 · February 7 at 1:30pm

Jason Barleson Lol I just figured it would almost make sense lol
 Like · Reply · February 11 at 8:47am

Steve Baumbach It's pretty clear what a portion of the state surplus should go towards to...
 Like · Reply · February 7 at 7:59pm

Nicci Li It's a proven fact that Michigan has the best crews when it comes to winter. Thanks for the hard work and doing your best to keep us safe. Most of what's going on out there is our own fault. 😊
 Like · Reply · February 18 at 12:32pm

2014 Winter Social Media Response