



NEWS ADVISORY

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For immediate release

Streets Crews Hard at Work on Potholes

City of Missoula Street Maintenance Division crews are hard at work on the potholes cropping up on Missoula streets following bouts of freezing rain and temperatures ranging from near zero to the 40s in the same week.

Those conditions are the most favorable for the development of potholes. Snow melts, and the water runs into cracks in the asphalt. Freezing and expansion of that water, combined with the wear of vehicle travel, break up the asphalt and lead to the growing pothole.

Strategy: Using three trucks at a time, Street Division crews are working on potholes on a priority basis. Streets with higher volumes of traffic get attention first. Those include, for instance, Mullan Road, Russell Street and Mount Avenue, as well as Third, Fifth and Sixth Streets and Madison Street.

Technology: Pothole patches hold up fairly well if the pavement is dry, which has not been the case lately. The City uses two methods.

- **Cold patch** material is a specially formulated asphalt that's emulsified and polymerized and meant to work in difficult off-season conditions. It's sticky and binds well, but it's susceptible to moisture. City crews are using sweepers to suck water out of the potholes before they're patched.
- **Hot oil injection patch** works best when streets are dry and outdoor temperatures warmer. Street crews are using it during warmer and drier days. The technique first requires blowing water out of the pothole, then applying layers of heated asphalt oil emulsion alternating with gravel chips.

Background: Pothole season points out the importance of street maintenance. Most of Missoula's major arterials have been overlaid or chip-sealed in the past five years. The streets that are scheduled for improvements and pavement maintenance are the most affected. Streets without curbs are the most vulnerable in this kind of weather because the water does not drain properly and weakens the base.

Budget: The City is committed to street maintenance and pothole management year-round and will make the budget work.

“We’re experiencing an old-fashioned Montana winter this year, and we need to adjust accordingly,” says Mayor John Engen. “Potholes are a fact of life this winter. We need folks’ help letting us know where they are, and we need their patience as we proceed to fill them.”

Report potholes two ways:

Call us at 552-6360.

Use our website at www.ci.missoula.mt.us. Go to the Street Maintenance Division page and use our form for reporting the location of a pothole.

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