

Snow hampers home services

Garbage collectors, letter carriers, meter readers struggle to find a path

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JOB 1: TRY TO FIND THOSE TRASH BAGS: Because of the heavy snowfall, waste collectors are dealing with the most difficult working conditions they've faced in years, the city says.

Photograph by: Bruce Edwards , The Journal

Recent heavy snowfall has slowed the pace of letter carriers, and Canada Post warns service might be temporarily cut off for homes where the sidewalks haven't been cleared.

City waste collectors and meter readers are also battling snowbanks.

On Tuesday, Epcor and ATCO Gas launched a joint safety campaign -- Clear and Win -- aimed at getting more residents to clear snow off their sidewalks and driveways so meter readers aren't impeded.

"We want meter readers to avoid slipping, tripping and falling over things like crazy carpets or simply going through waist-high snow," said Epcor media relations spokeswoman Michelle St-Amand.

Waste collector Shawn Rudyk is finding it difficult to navigate between the windrows that line most residential streets and alleys.

"Right now it's the large amount of snow and ice that are the big hazards," said Rudyk. "If people could give us clear access to their garbage -- by keeping it close to the alley or street -- there would be a smaller chance of injury."

Homeowner Helen Corpuz thinks the garbage collectors are going as fast as they can. She wonders if anything more can be done about the windrows.

"There is no place else to put the snow, so I wonder if maybe they have community residential meetings that discuss better places to put it," said Corpuz.

Rudyk finds it difficult to drive through back alleys. "It's more of a challenge finding garbage when snow has been shovelled on top of it. And if they don't clean the snow off, we might not see it."

The safety of waste collectors can also be improved if snow is cleared near garbage stands, if vehicles are off streets on collection day, and if waste is put away from slippery areas such as eavestrough spouts.

Connie Boyce, director of community relations at the city's waste management branch, said the recent snowfalls have delayed the complete pickup of Christmas trees for two to three more weeks.

"They're still picking up trees," said Boyce. "It's taking longer than normal, but we've completed the southwest area and are working on collecting in the north end."

A Canada Post carrier who gave his name as Joel said it's taking him longer than normal this time of year to deliver the mail. He thinks it's partially because he rolled his left ankle last Monday.

"If the snow on that sidewalk had been wiped away, I would've seen the ice hidden underneath it. Unfortunately I didn't, and I twisted my ankle."

A city bylaw requires snow to be cleared down to the cement within 48 hours after a snowfall. Applying ice melters, gravel or sand to can also provide some traction.

If safety precautions aren't taken, mail services could temporarily cease, warned Canada Post spokeswoman Teresa Williams. "In cases where snow or ice presents a hazard, letter carriers have the option not to deliver to those areas. We would then provide a notice to homeowners asking them to fix the issue that exists, then mail delivery would resume."

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