



Touching Ground

MARCH 2003 • VOLUME 6 • ISSUE 1

AT THE DES MOINES INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

Let it Snow, Let it Snow

On February 14, 2003, Des Moines experienced its heaviest snowfall this year and one of the largest snow accumulations in Des Moines weather history. Fourteen inches of the white stuff came down on Friday evening, Valentine's Day. Even before the first snowflake hit the ground the airport was preparing for the worst.

Preparations for snow removal are a year-round airport activity, says Ken McCoy, Operations Administrator for the DSM facility. "There is a tremendous amount of time, effort and cost to prepare for snow season. The reason is obvious, if the runways are slippery and the surface area unsafe, we risk the safety of our passengers." There are three areas of preparation: training of

personnel, preventive maintenance on snow removal vehicles, and the acquisition of consumables used on runways and taxiways, such as sand, de-icing chemicals, etc.

The airport utilizes reports from the National Weather Service, local television stations, the Weather Channel and the Airport Terminal Information Service (ATIS). The airport has five Operations Officers who lead efforts when bad weather is forecast. At the first sign of accumulating snow or reduced braking conditions on the runways, Airport Operations is alerted and the entire snow crew begins to gear up and coordinate snow and ice removal. The snow crews maintain a 24-hour coverage on a 12-hour shift rotation through the snow/ice event.

The Snow Desk can issue a Runway Condition Report (RCR) to the airlines and other tenants, including our General Aviation pilots. From the RCR report, pilots make the decision whether or not their aircraft will have sufficient braking action to land. It is important to note the

flight planning departments of the respective airlines make the ultimate decision on whether to cancel flights, not the airport's operational staff. They take into account not only what conditions are happening at our facility, but at other airports around the country as well. Even if we're doing a



Blowers can throw snow 150' at a rate of 6,000 tons/hour. Operations can keep pace with a snowfall at a rate of one inch/hour.

good job combating the elements, the airlines may still choose to cancel flights in lieu of the "big picture." If flights take off here and get stranded somewhere else, we're not looking out for our passenger's best interest.

"I remember a storm in January of 1996 that we would plow and within two minutes it was covered up again," said Randy Craig, DSM's Maintenance Equipment Supervisor. "We could hardly see to clean off the runways. Most of the staff worked through the night to ensure the airport was open at 6 A.M. the next morning." The local airlines nominated the DSM Airport for the Balchem/Post Award for our superior effort in the face of that blizzard. We won the award for airports our size that year.

Sometimes when mechanical snow removal fails to achieve the desired results, Operations decides to use chemicals on the runway. Deicer chemicals normally used for aircraft applications in icy weather are very expensive so a cost/effect analysis is considered. Also, the Federal Aviation

continued...

Airport Security- What You Should Know

The world situation is changing daily and security is a priority on the home front. DSM International Airport remains in compliance with standards received from the federal government. The screening process for baggage at checkpoints is the responsibility of the Transportation Security Administration (TSA). Accordingly, the airport can only disclose information to the general public on a "need to know basis" with the reality that the more information we reveal about security measures, the less the public is secure in the airport environment.

For the latest information on what to expect and do in regard to air travel, the airport web site at <http://www.dsmairport.com> is the best resource for passengers using our facility. Use the link from our webpage to the TSA site entitled "Prepare for Takeoff." There is a wealth of information on that site, from what you can bring in baggage to how much time to allow for check-ins to ensure you will make your flight. The recent vehicle inspections and random searches are set in place to comply with TSA requirements and change according to the alert status. These are also posted on our website and released to the media for public information.

Plan on arriving at the airport two-hours before departure. This is especially important for Spring Break travel. Be aware that the airport will post peak hours for the airport (5:00-8:00 A.M. and 1:00-4:00 P.M.) and busiest days because of special fare charters (Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday mornings).

Assistant Federal Security Director, Mike Lansing states, "The public wants and expects us to make safety a priority and we are doing whatever we can to make DSM International the safest most secure airport around." ✈️

T-Hangar Update

As of March 1st of 2002, Des Moines International Airport took over the management of the General Aviation (GA) area, the T-Hangars for private aircraft owners. The airport is working with tenants to fix-up the hangars and improve the area. Feedback is positive and the airport is committed to retaining a strong relationship with General Aviation.

One key element is maintenance of the property. The airport is receiving high marks for the attention to detail in providing improvements such as:

- New interior lighting from incandescent to high output/low temperature fluorescents
- Adding of fire extinguishers in all hangers
- New cabling on the doors and adding grease zerks for smoother operation
- Grinding uneven surfaces down in doorways so planes can roll out easier
- "Testing" extensions on gutter downspouts to alleviate drainage into hangars and freezing of that spillage.

Future improvements are planned. This spring we'll seal leaks in the gutter system. A new physical structure is planned for added services



The flight planning room/restroom will look like this existing City building except the window/door layout will be different.

with the addition of a GA flight planning enclosure slated for completion by June of 2003. It will provide a small work area with computer access for preflight planning and a unisex restroom facility. It will be located off the southeast corner of the existing T-Hangar apron.

In addition to all of the above, the city has proposed to accommodate insurance and liability issues. Better communications is a goal to help address concerns quicker. Using e-mail is one example. All in all, the airport intends to provide a good service product to our T-hangar tenants. ✈

Let it Snow *Cont.*

Administration (FAA) strictly regulates the chemicals on the airside to ensure that they have no Chlorides that may cause corrosion or metal fatigue on the aircraft. In addition, when chemicals are used, care must be taken that the contaminated snow is collected and then treated to avoid environment contamination.

What's on the horizon to improve our snow removal operation? Future plans include replacing some of the older trucks and purchasing another high-powered snow blower. Also, with advancements in wireless communications, we hope by next snow season we'll have a mobile laptop computer connected to the Internet for airside field monitoring. Information then could be sent to all the recipients with one keystroke, eliminating the time lapse in the collection process.

McCoy sums it all up. "We provide a very high-quality product to the community we serve. We receive many compliments from air captains arriving from other airports that say we are maintaining great runway conditions in lieu of very severe weather." Des Moines International Airport, as a team, is proud to say "Let it snow, let it snow!" ✈



• DES MOINES INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT
 • contact us at:
 5800 FLEUR DRIVE • SUITE 201
 DES MOINES, IOWA 50321
 • visit our web site: WWW.DSMAIRPORT.COM

PRSR1 STD
 U.S. POSTAGE
 PAID
 BURLINGTON, IA
 52601
 PERMIT NO. 847

DES MOINES INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT
 5800 FLEUR DRIVE • SUITE 201
 DES MOINES, IOWA 50321