

Winter road services at IFAT 2008: The role of standards in the battle with snow and ice

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New, European-wide standards for snow ploughs and gritting lorries now set out the performance requirements of these vehicles and define the interfaces between vehicles and equipment. The regulations will have a great influence on future purchasing decisions on winter road-services equipment, not least because now it will be easier to compare performance across the different products. At IFAT 2008, which takes place from 5 to 9 May 2008 in Munich, visitors will have a chance to review all the latest trends in this area.

Six years ago the European standards institute, CEN, launched a Europe-wide standardisation project for road services, including winter road-clearance services. The aim is to achieve a single standard for the various types of equipment, for example snow ploughs, or gritting lorries. And to define the interfaces between the vehicles and the equipment. The idea behind it is to strengthen competition in Europe. The benefit to users is that their operations become much more flexible – for example, a snow plough from Italy can then be fitted easily and securely to a German Unimog.

The first European standards in this area entered force at the end of last year, and automatically became German standards (DIN). The leading European and global manufacturers of gritting and clearing technology come from Germany. “Not least because of this market leadership the German representatives have had a significant say in the design of the future standards. Many of the affected regulations are based on German standards or developments,” explained Dr.-Ing. Horst Hanke, chairman of the winter services section in the association of local authority waste-management and urban cleansing services, a member of the association of local authority services companies (VKS in VKU).

The new standards set out for example the requirements for the different types of snow ploughs (DIN EN 15583) and snow blowers. Alongside basic definitions, requirements and dimensions, they define characteristics such as performance, clearance quality and quantity, drive speed and clearance distance.

Developing appropriate measuring procedures is a difficult job, because it is necessary to take into account the very wide variation in snow consistency that is found. The most important and also the most demanding part of this standards work, says Dr Hanke, is in the area of gritting equipment. The aim is to regulate the quality of gritting and to develop reproducible test procedures. Because of this complexity the standards project (DIN EN 15597) was divided into two stages. The first stage came into force last year. It describes general requirements of gritting equipment, and a comparatively simple testing method to determine grit quantity. Here the speed of spreading is electronically simulated and the quantity of salt or grit determined at the distributing plate. The total quantity applied may not deviate from a maximum of six percent from the given target in the case of salt, and with abrasives like grit, 15 percent deviation is permitted.

More interesting, but also more difficult, is the second part of the standard, which looks into requirements for spreading area, spreading pattern and direction. Here, the aim is to develop tests to determine the spreading pattern, i.e. how accurately the abrasives are applied to the roadway. And then to define the requirements that need to be met in this regard by the equipment. The second part of the standard is still in preparation and will come out at the earliest during the course of this year.

Also taken into account in the standards-setting process are the road and weather information systems. As well as defining general requirements for systems and interfaces, the standard also sets out the required measuring accuracy of the sensors that collect the data describing the parameters concerning weather and road conditions. In a second, more difficult part, the job will be then to describe data processing, data exchange and the weather forecasts. It is also intended to include regulations concerning the mobile collection of road-condition data.

In order to ensure that in future equipment and front attachment plates for vehicles are compatible across Europe, DIN EN 15432 defines the parameters and the design of the mountings. DIN EN 15431 regulates the interfaces and connections for the

hydraulics and electrics. For the hydraulic systems requirements are set out for performance, pressure, through-flow and temperature regulation. Here, too, it has been possible to set out unified European standards, accepted by all countries, so that in future equipment will be compatible across the continent. DIN EN 15430 defines the data interface between all kinds of attachable and built-in equipment and the vehicle. In the second part of this standard, on which work is still progressing, the job is to unify communication between the vehicle and the central communications point and to unify data evaluation.

The new regulations will have a major influence on purchasing decisions for new vehicles and equipment for road services, including winter services. Dr Horst Hanke: "In particular the standards as regards the interfaces are a very important factor. When buying or specifying new equipment and vehicles it is imperative to observe the new regulations. And even the draft standards, the ones referred to as 'Gelbdruck', can already serve as a basis for procurement and tenders." To research the draft and finished standards or order copies, go to the website of the Deutsches Institut für Normung at www.din.de.

Demand for gritting and clearing technology is mixed at present. Walter Schmitz, chairman of the winter maintenance group of the EUnited Municipal Equipment Association, explains: "The low snowfall in the winter of 2006/2007 meant that many local authorities, in particular the smaller ones, put off buying new winter road-services equipment. Also, the higher tax revenues enjoyed especially by German cities and local authorities are being used not for buying vehicles and equipment, but for building and maintenance measures. On the other hand customers with long-term investment plans, such as the road services departments, are now buying more winter road-services equipment, as the budgets they had for last year were not fully used up, because of lower consumption of salt."

The environmental trade fair IFAT, which this year takes place for the 15th time in Munich, from 5 to 9 May 2008, is an excellent and well established opportunity to find out about current developments in winter road-services equipment, and the information and communication technology now being used, e.g. location positioning, data collection/transfer/recording and applications management. In line with the importance of the fair, the above-mentioned associations, VKS and EUnited Municipal Equipment are conceptual sponsors of IFAT.

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IFAT is the world's most important trade fair for the environment and waste disposal – for water, sewage, refuse and recycling. In 2005 the event attracted a new record number of participants with 2,223 exhibitors from 36 countries and 109,000 trade visitors from 166 nations. IFAT 2008, which takes place in Munich from 5 to 9 May 2008, offers an attractive exhibition programme: innovative solutions and state-of-the-art technology for practical, economical operations, a broad range of professional services in the area of water, sewage and refuse management and numerous attractive information events.

Messe München International (MMI)

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