
CITY OF MUSCATINE PRESS RELEASE

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POTHOLE SEASON BEGINS AS THE SNOW MELTS AWAY

City crews begin task of finding, cleaning, and filling potholes throughout Muscatine

MUSCATINE, Iowa – As winters' cold transitions into the warmth of spring and the accumulated snowfall melts away, an annually occurring danger to vehicles is revealed and making itself known in our journey through Muscatine.

Potholes.

According to a post on roadsoup.com, a pothole is essentially any dip or deviation in

a paved road's smooth surface. Potholes form when groundwater seeps underneath the pavement. When the water freezes underneath, it will expand, causing the pavement to swell, bend, and subsequently crack. Then, when the ice fully melts, gaps become present underneath the paved surface. The pavement weakens further as the process repeats.

To make matters worse, every time a car drives over the now weakened surface, the weight of the vehicle continues to break down the pavement even further. At this point, pieces of the



Melting snow hides the depth and width of many potholes on city streets. Drivers are urged to slow down and use caution while moving through water on the streets.

roadway may become dislodged and displaced completely. Once that happens, you officially have a pothole. But the process does not end there. A newly formed pothole can refill with water, freeze, and continue to break more asphalt, creating an even larger crater that poses an even greater risk.

Because potholes primarily form from freezing water, they generally manifest during the winter. However, it is not until the snow completely recedes and the ice thaws entirely that potholes become noticeable. That is why freshly formed potholes are most likely to emerge during springtime — a good reason for drivers to be particularly cautious in the spring.

“It is pothole season,” Brian Stineman, Department of Public Works Director said. “As drivers have surely noticed, we have moved from slick to bumpy roads.”

In response, Department of Public Works (DPW) crews have shifted their efforts from clearing streets and alleys of snow to repairing the many potholes that are springing up around Muscatine. That effort began Wednesday (Feb. 24, 2021) with crews working as quickly as possible to fill as many holes as possible.

“This time of year presents problems because many holes are full of water,” Stineman said. “That water has to be removed before patching material can be placed.”

Residents will see crews use compressed air to force water out of the holes as well as torches to dry the potholes out before the hot-mix asphalt is placed in the hole and compacted.

The problem with using hot-mix at this time of year is that the asphalt plants are still closed for the winter season.

“With the new equipment purchased last year we are able to make our own hot-mix asphalt which compacts better and lasts longer,” Stineman said. “Hopefully, we will only have to patch holes one time but even these patched areas could be subject to the freezing and thawing if water gets underneath them.”

The equipment heats the recycled asphalt in several stages to break down the recycled material and create new hot mix. The recycled asphalt comes from construction projects during the construction season and stored at the Public Works yard. You can watch a video of the process at <https://youtu.be/NNfjzdlHQcw>.

DPW crews had previously used what is called “cold patch” to fill in the potholes. This was just a temporary patch and DPW crews would have to come back with a “hot mix” that will stay in place longer.

If you see a pothole and would like to report its location, you can call DPW at (563) 263-8933 and report the location, email photos and location to feedback@muscatineiowa.gov, or visit the City of Muscatine web site (www.muscatineiowa.gov) and click on the “[Let Us Know](#)” link. This link will take you to our request tracker where you can scroll down to the bottom of the page and select “pothole”. You will have to sign in or create an account to use the feature.

Once created, however, you will be able to use several other features on the city web site including “[Notify Me](#)”, which provides opportunities to receive notifications from a number of city departments, “[Community Voice](#)”, which allows you to comment and make suggestions in a public discussion forum, “[OpenGov](#)”, the official transparency site for the City of Muscatine, and you can even pay your parking tickets at “[Online Payments](#)”.