



Spreading the Word about A New Revolution in Winter Road Maintenance

When those who must approve your key equipment recommendations value long-term savings over short-term cost, acquiring the machine you've always waited for gets exponentially easier.

Such was the case for Charles Novak, long-time Street and Sanitation Commissioner for the City of Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio (population 50,000).

"The Epoke (epokena.com) bulk spreaders are real game-changers," begins Novak. "For overall performance, safety, and material control, nothing we've ever used or heard about can match them for combating snow and ice."

Novak's quest to find the best technology to keep his streets clear and safe was fueled by a Mayor who empowered the city's Public Works leaders to seek the latest innovations, the cutting-edge machines that will make a genuine operational difference.

When Novak began his Street duties in 2002, Cuyahoga Falls was using large hoppers that dispensed dry salt. But there was simply no effective way he could measure exactly how much salt was being spread by his crew. Not to mention, every driver did things differently.



Chuck Novak (left), Street and Sanitation Commissioner for the City of Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio, and Dave Johnson, Sales Manager for Bell Equipment, Novak's local Epoke representative, discuss the material pre-wetting capabilities of an Epoke bulk spreader. By adding brine to dry salt, the city optimally controls its salt spend – and just how accurately dispensed material coats targeted lanes.

"Bottom line, our salt supply was going all over the place – with no means to track how much just bounced and scattered...or how much went into a ditch," claims Novak. "All of this was not only frustrating, but quite expensive as well. The price of salt kept escalating, winters were brutal, and we weren't keeping good records of our salt usage."

But, beyond improved tracking, Novak saw other opportunities for better salt optimization. For instance, he suggested that the city take better advantage of its large reserve of brine. At about this time, Novak's local Epoke dealer, Bell Equipment (bellequip.com), requested an opportunity to test its line of Epoke bulk spreaders.

"Epoke, right off the bat, literally guaranteed us a 30% savings on our dry salt," begins Novak. "Dave Johnson, our Bell rep, then told us that some of his customers were actually saving 50% on their prior salt use. That led me to do a few quick calculations, making some assumptions regarding length and harshness of winters, about our potential savings – all trying to determine our payback if we bought the Epoke equipment."

Epoke, through Bell, agreed to provide the City of Cuyahoga Falls a demo unit for a month to prove Johnson's claims.

"Over those next 30 days, I captured 22 comparisons, Epoke versus our existing hoppers. Consistently, the Epoke product used more than 50 percent less dry salt," says Novak.

Novak then presented his findings to the Mayor, the Service Director, and the Finance Director. The decision-makers could quickly see the savings the city would realize versus past salt outlays. Novak was then given the go-ahead by City Council to buy his first three Epoke 3500 machines.

After nine years of further study and the addition of several more Epokes to his fleet, Novak can now confidently count on 50% salt savings one winter season to the next versus the amount of material put out by the city’s past machines.



One of the City of Cuyahoga Falls’ 16 Epoke bulk spreaders in action during a major snowstorm. Using Epoke machines for snow and ice maintenance versus its previous large hoppers has saved the city almost \$3-million in dry salt expenditures over the past eight years.

The Epokes, of course, through a renowned and patented “Epoke Principle” pre-wetting mechanism that utilizes an agitator, a feed roller, and a rubber conveyor belt to deliver a precise amount of material to the spreader disk, enabled Novak and staff to efficiently mix the city’s ample brine supply with the dry salt to make the salt heavier and far stickier.

“The Epoke automatically pre-wets up to 30% of the dry material we’re going to dispense. The added weight, alone, means a substantial reduction in our salt’s ability to bounce and scatter. It also helps lessen the chance of high winds blowing the salt off the pavement,” states Novak.

Through extensive Federal Highway Administration research, Novak learned that just four percent of the pre-wetted salt was lost in the grass. With the previously used hoppers, more than 40% ended up outside of the lanes being treated.

An operator can easily adjust the Epoke’s salt pattern, using the in-cab EpoMaster® controller, so that the dispensed pre-wetted material more precisely hits its targeted lanes, drastically reducing waste and damage to the environment. Now, Novak’s drivers can hit up to three lanes from the slow lane. Prior to using the Epoke’s symmetry feature, the city’s

drivers would stay in the middle lane and try to bounce the dry salt to all lanes.

“Best of all, we’re putting down the salt exactly where we want to put down the salt,” says Novak. “That is a huge time and money savings. Our Epokes are ground speed-controlled so that no matter what speed we’re going, we have full control of our application rate.”

The Epoke spreader automatically stops when the truck comes to a stop. That’s a major advantage over the city’s previous hopper spinners that would just keep throwing out salt – and leaving large piles of wasted material where the truck had stopped – unless the driver remembered to flip a lever to disengage the hydraulics.

Novak was especially impressed with the way the Epoke spreader can be programmed to put down a specific amount of material per lane.

“By just turning a knob, we can go from applying 100 pounds on one lane mile to simultaneously putting that same amount on another lane as well,” says Novak. “No other machine could ever do that before.”

Beyond the Epoke’s pre-wetting, symmetry, and ground-speed control capabilities, it’s a superior anti-icer as well.



The Epoke 4902 AST™ spreader offers high-speed anti-icing coverage for virtually every possible challenge, including multi-lane highways.

“Our 4400 model provides us enough liquid capacity to put down a thin layer of brine prior to a storm moving in. By doing this, we prevent ice from bonding to the pavement. Studies show that we use 10 times less salt when we anti-ice our roads,” states Novak.

Regarding salt savings, Novak and Bell Equipment conducted exhaustive research to show that the City of Cuyahoga Falls, because of its use of Epoke spreaders, could potentially save more than \$4,750,000 in salt over a 15-year period, based on current usage data and conditions. From 2005 until early 2014, the city has saved over \$3-million in dry material alone.

“So, considering the cost of my Epokes and the general maintenance that would most likely be required per each machine over that timeframe, the equipment-purchase cost easily justifies the spend,” says Novak.

In all, the city has 16 Epokes, one for each large truck in Novak’s fleet: Eleven 3500 units that attach to single-axle vehicles and are ideal for high-capacity spreading of dry and pre-wetted material; four 4400 models that have the same capabilities of the 3500 units, but can anti-ice multiple lanes at once; and one brand-new Sirius 4902 AST™ combination style that offers high-speed anti-icing coverage for virtually every possible challenge – from parking lots to side streets to multi-lane highways.

Every Epoke bulk spreader can be equipped with an easy-to-use EpoMaster® remote Cab Controller that enables operators to expertly control the width, rate, and symmetry of the material being applied. A completely automated, hands-free, GPS-guided EpoSat® advanced control option is also available.

Installation of the Epokes is also significantly safer and faster versus the way in which the City of Cuyahoga Falls once attached its hoppers to its trucks.

“We really like the fact that the Epokes stand on their own legs. It only takes a few minutes for us to change our dump trucks into spreaders and vice-versa. And it doesn’t matter if the spreader is loaded with wet or dry material, either. In the past, we had to use a front loader and chains to lift up the hoppers so we could get them on our trucks. Not only was this a lengthy and cumbersome process, it was fairly dangerous at times, too,” states Novak.

Plus, at the end of the season, our hoppers and dump beds would be encrusted with old salt, brine, and other materials.

“Our Epokes, though, are very simple to keep clean. We just hose them off, including underneath, stand them on their legs, and store them in our yard. Absolutely no problem to easily and safely maintain them season to season,” claims Novak.

The Street Department’s drivers had absolutely no trouble learning how to use the Epoke equipment, either.

“Everything is just so intuitive, so basic to work. Inside each cab is a screen that shows exactly what you’re putting down. All adjustments are pretty simple as well...couple of clicks of a knob to alter the symmetry or amount of material you’re spreading. When Dave showed me these features, I was blown away...because, like no other I’ve ever seen or heard about, this machine is geared toward optimum operator ease of use,” says Novak.

Bell Equipment represents Epoke in Ohio and Michigan. According to Novak, both companies are cut out of the same Customer Service mold.

“Epoke, in general, and my local Epoke dealer, Bell Equipment, are exceptionally responsive to our needs,” says Novak. “Both firms are constantly checking on us, making sure that our spreaders are working to expectations. And, when we call them, no matter what or when, we get good answers to our questions. Our chief mechanic even has the cell phone number of the head technical person at Epoke.”



Chuck Novak, Street and Sanitation Commissioner for the City of Cuyahoga Falls; Ron Garberoglio, one of the city’s Heavy Equipment Operators; and Dave Johnson, Novak’s local Epoke rep, examine the spreader disk on an Epoke 4400 bulk spreader. Novak especially likes the way the driver, by simply turning a knob inside the cab, can easily adjust just how much material can be put down per lane.

Novak cites one other critical juncture in his history with Epoke equipment...one that confirmed he had made the right choice in bulk spreaders:

"I always want my key staff to have a certain comfort level before I recommend any machine purchases to my superiors. So, before I asked for the money to purchase our initial Epokes, I asked one of my drivers, someone with a pretty strong resistance to change, to take out a 3500 and put it through the paces," says Novak.

The depth of response surprised even Novak. His skeptical driver came back raving that with the Epoke, he did his route with just one load of pre-wetted material. He would have needed at least three loads of dry salt to do the same job, requiring multiple trips back to the salt barn.

"He was very influential with the rest of the crew. When they saw that he no longer feared a switch from the hoppers, my selling argument to my supervisors became even stronger," says Novak.

Management who listen and welcome ongoing discussion from its Street Commissioner about cutting-edge innovations that can improve long-term operational efficiency and effectiveness. Plus, a crew that understands how new equipment can make their task easier and safer, even in the most severe winter storms. That's a combination that enables the City of Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio, with the help of Epoke spreaders, to set a new standard of excellence in snow and ice maintenance.

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