



# Sea-to-Sky Highway Improvement Project Community Update

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## Winter highway reliability a two-way street Maintenance crews and drivers to keep Sea-to-Sky clear this season

**Tom Cloutier, assistant operations manager for Miller Capilano Maintenance Corp., says the company is ready for the winter season.** “Although there’s more active construction than last year, we have the equipment and the experience to handle it,” says Cloutier. The company’s winter planning process begins in early fall with RCMP and other corridor stakeholder meetings and weekly traffic meetings with project teammates from Peter Kiewit Sons.

As Cloutier’s crews equip their vehicles and monitor weather forecasts, drivers are urged to do the same. “We’re in constant communication with emergency services,” he says. “Police know where and when to set up checkpoints for proper tires, and it’s up to drivers to have the right tires with plenty of tread.”

Maintenance crews also prepare themselves with advance weather information from private forecasters, Environment Canada, and web-based highway condition reports from Drive BC. To keep track of micro-climates within the corridor, Miller Capilano gets three location-specific forecasts each day. When an isolated weather event is spotted, crews are alerted to that location before the weather sets in.

Each combination of wind, air temperature, road surface temperature and precipitation results in a different condition on the highway. Cloutier and quality assurance manager Merv Stalkie reminisce: “Remember last February, when we got 60 cm of snow in 24 hours? Instead of what forecasters called a gradual warming trend, it warmed up quickly. When snow turns to rain, slush and drainage become the issues, and we open all the catch basins. That’s when we change from snow boots to gumboots.”

### **Crews who know the road, equipment winter-ready**

People are the first resource, and Miller Capilano has the depth to see us through the toughest winter. With nearly 55 years’ experience between them, Cloutier and Stalkie know how to be ready for anything. The company’s experienced and dedicated full-timers are backed up with drivers hired and trained for winter shifts. A third layer comes in the form of logging and concrete truck drivers – experienced local professionals who know every curve in the road.



Then there’s the equipment. For starters, there is a fleet of 12 trucks that can work at 70 km/h, fitted with salt and sand spreaders, along with front-end, wing and under-body plows to clear a 14-foot path. New, wider highway sections are easier to plow, and two trucks together can clear the entire highway.

A debate has raged for years (at least in winter maintenance circles) over steel vs. rubber snowplow blades. A steel-rubber composite blade tested well last year for Miller Capilano. The new blades are more expensive, but as durable as steel, without scraping damage. Centre-line markers don’t disappear with each pass of the plow, because, instead of sitting on top of the pavement, the reflectors now sit down in grooves, making the tops flush with the road surface.

### **Brine the key to successful salting**

Anyone who has sprinkled salt on fresh, dry snow has seen what happens – nothing. Salt needs moisture to do anything. To counter this, you might see a large tank mounted on the back of some trucks. The tank is filled with a brine of sodium chloride (salt water), and before the temperature drops, an average of 90 litres per lane-kilometre is sprayed on dry roads. *(see next page)*

(continued from page 1) Salt brine will not be blown off the road surface as easily as salt crystals, reducing environmental impacts. When the surface temperature drops, the salty solution on the road lowers the freezing point, reducing slippery sections before they occur.

So, with the Porteau, Squamish and Cheakamus salt sheds stocked, the winter crews trained and the equipment serviced and fitted out, Miller Capilano is ready for another season. Now it's the highway driver's turn.

With winter tires on, weather forecast and road conditions report in mind, Stalkie reminds us to, "Slow down, leave extra travel time and extra space for stopping. When the snow flies, it's easy on the gas, brakes and steering, and give the winter crews plenty of room ahead to clear a path for you."

For more information on winter driving click on the Seasonal Driving Tips link at [www.drivebc.ca](http://www.drivebc.ca).

## Making people wave and smile: you're in the Ben-zone



**Ben Richardson likes to work with people.** "I'm a people-person, and I first realized how much pleasure I got talking with visitors when I guided Niagara Falls tours." Eighteen years ago he came to B.C. to see a new province, and fell in love with it.

Richardson has turned his love of people and optimistic attitude to his work on the Sea-to-Sky Highway Improvement Project. As a traffic control person, he takes his work seriously, but always with humour and warmth. "Right from the beginning it was a way to make the job more fun and interesting. By smiling and waving I let people know that I understand their frustration with having to drive through construction. I like to try and make their day."

Richardson has lived in the Sea-to-Sky corridor for nearly two decades. He has five children at home and one in Ontario. He has worked in traffic control on a variety of projects over the past 10 years. "I have worked in the local forest industry and related forest renewal jobs and have helped the community build many of the trails around the Squamish area."

When asked about his job on the Sea-to-Sky Highway Improvement Project, Richardson says, "People tell me I make their day when they see me out there with a smile and a wave. I'm honoured." In an average day on the highway, Richardson waves to thousands of people travelling north and south through the construction. "I can make at least 4,000 of them smile." He hopes that drivers understand the need to slow down, "We aren't slowing you down just because we can, but because we want to do this work safely."



Crews from Miller Capilano Maintenance Corp. are prepared to handle winter storms on the Sea-to-Sky Highway. These photos show clearing activity following the February 2006 storm that dumped snow from Porteau Cove to Whistler.

## Recycled truck tires make construction blasting safer

**There was a time when landfills were full of rubber tires which often burned uncontrollably for months.** Now virtually all semi-truck tires are re-used in a range of other products that include blast mats on the Sea-to-Sky Highway Improvement Project. “While working near the existing alignment or traffic,” says Kiewit segment 1 manager Brad Mytko, “we must use mats for our blasting. Their main function is to prevent blast-shattered rock flying away from the source of the blast, or flyrock prevention, as we call it.” Mytko explains, “This is important when we are working around communities and infrastructure such as hydro and rail lines.” The blast mats help to minimize traffic disruptions as well. A well matted blast allows work to continue while traffic flow can be maintained a safe distance away. Blast mats have been successfully used in over 50 blasts on the southern construction at Eagleridge.

Because of the cost, blast mats are usually used only near settled areas. “They are also expensive to move around and re-use. You need a fairly large excavator or loader to move these 2,400 kg items, and they take time to place. However, it is economic for an operation of our size – we have 70 mats in my segment alone – and we win cost-wise in a couple of areas. We save operationally by being able to use a significantly larger blast, moving more rock in a given time, if it is matted. In addition, we have the assurance that we will not damage any nearby bridges, roads or homes. We also save on the cost of the mats because the supplier, Target Recycling, can rebuild the ones we can’t repair.”

### Heavier blast mats a product of innovative thinking

Tony Stock, owner of Target Recycling on Vancouver Island, started collecting tires 17 years ago as a transporter and soon found himself researching other uses for them. Previous industry practice utilized car tires for dynamite blast mats. Looking for a low-tech product led to the creation of a heavier mat for use with today’s explosives. Target’s blast mats are now used from Costa Rica to Alaska.

The mats are made by a simple process of removing the tire sidewalls, laying the treads end to end, hole-punching them with a massive punch press and binding them together with cable. They are so heavy that they do more than prevent flyrock from blasting. The mats also redirect the concussion force back to the blast origin. This has two effects: noise reduction and allowing the use of more explosive force to shatter the rock into smaller pieces, which can be trucked out more quickly and efficiently.

The mats are easy to repair, simply by replacing damaged tires with new. This allows Target and Kiewit to operate more efficiently, sending damaged mats back to the Island for repair on the same truck used to deliver new ones to the Sea-to-Sky Highway on the mainland. “We started out as an environmental firm,” says Tony, “and we appreciate the way Kiewit seems to go out of their way to get it right with these kinds of issues.”

Waste rubber from the repairs is shredded and used as a 5 percent additive with hog fuel in a steam plant in Port Alberni to generate electricity. The rubber raises the combustion temperature sufficiently to destroy dioxins and furans that usually result from burning hog fuel, which also makes the steam plant more cost-effective to operate.

*Photo sequence showing crews with excavator placing the 2400kg mats over the drilled and explosive-filled holes in the rock outcrop and the excavators moving in to clear the blasted rock from the highway. Note the blast mats in the centre of the last photo.*



## Winter work through Squamish

Highway construction will continue through the winter in the Squamish area, including urban Squamish. Highlights of the work include:

- Widening to four-lanes from Murrin Park north.
- New two-lane bridge being constructed at Gonzales Creek. Winter work includes pier and parapet construction. Excavated rock from nearby will be hauled to Gonzales Bridge for bridge approaches.
- Roadwork in the Shannon Falls area includes clearing and road construction which will continue through to spring. Construction will continue on Shannon Falls Bridge, expected to be completed by May 2007.
- Through urban Squamish, highway widening will continue with paving in areas where pre-load has now been moved. This will be a first lift of paving, with final paving in 2007. Existing pre-load has been moved to other areas and construction will continue in those new pre-load areas.
- With the completion of the concrete box culvert at Mashiter spawning channels and the piles now in place for the Mamquam Bridge there will be no further work on the Mamquam Bridge until spring 2007.
- Hauling in pre-load south of Depot Road is expected to be ongoing through November and December, followed by road construction.
- Throughout the winter there will be on-going culvert work through the area as well as general construction work including trenching, widening and backfilling.



### For further information:

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#### Construction Delay or Closure Information

Current information (including locations and times of highway construction delays or closures) is available through the toll-free information line or the project website. Up-to-date information is available on the website with our travel planning tools which include a weekly schedule, seasonal travel planner, traffic bulletins and closure and delay projections to 2009.

**www.seatoskyimprovements.ca**  
**1-877-4SAFE 99 (1-877-472-3399)**

Text message Road Alert service is also available with details on how to subscribe on the website <http://www.seatoskyimprovements.ca> or visit [www.theweather-network.com/roadalerts](http://www.theweather-network.com/roadalerts)

#### Please take a moment to give us your feedback.

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Easy to read  Too technical

On a scale of 1-10 (10=terrific) please rate

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