Grounds department works to keep roads, walkways clear

By Carol Harrah

Despite a winter storm that dumped about 10 inches of snow on Lincoln Feb. 1 and 2, the UNL Department of Grounds managed to clear roads and walks enough to keep the university open, the director of the department said.

Bud Dasenbrock said the worst part of the two-day storm was the wind.

"The worst part of snow removal is when we have a long storm with winds and drifting," he said. "That makes it difficult for our workers to keep up. I think we did an excellent job of keeping the university open during that time."

Dasenbrock said the grounds department has a yearly operating budget, rather than being allotted a certain amount of money for each segment of work they do.

"We do an excellent job within our capabilities," he said. "But we could triple our budget if we had people working longer shifts and had shifts 24 hours a day."

Officials in both the grounds department and the Physical Plant said they didn't know how much snow removal costs at UNL. They said because the departments are allotted a total budget, which isn't broken down, the money spent for grounds upkeep is used wherever needed.

Dasenbrock said the grounds department has 38 permanent employees. However, when there is a snowstorm, he said he hires an extra 30 students to help with the work.

"Shoveling snow is tiring," he said. "And it's worse when you have a strong wind and a large wind-chill factor. We try not to over-exert our employees."

Snow removal is done for emergency services first, he said. Walkways and entrances to the power plants on both UNL campuses, food services at the residence halls, the health center, building steps and student, faculty and administrative and commuter parking lots are also some priority areas for snow removal.

The grounds department then works on opening sidewalks on campus so students can still attend classes, he said. They gradually widen sidewalks so that snow may be easily removed the next time it snows.

"Our budget is so limited," Dasenbrock said. "It takes us longer to get what we want to do done, . . but we do an excellent job with what we do have."

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