

Progressive Railroading

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Maintenance of way: Snow and ice-removal products and services

— by *Julie Sneider* Assistant Editor

Freight and passenger railroad managers might still be catching their breath after digging out from this past winter's record-breaking snowfall. But it's not too early to start planning snow- and ice-removal strategies for next winter. Taking stock now of what will be necessary to keep trains running and on time during cold and severe weather conditions will help snow and ice removal equipment suppliers ensure they have the products and services that railroads demand.

The winter of 2010-11 was unusual not only for shattering snowfall records in cold-weather states, but also for the amount of ice and snow that fell in normally warm-weather states in the South. Railroad managers who planned early and adequately handled the severe weather without major glitches.

Now that spring has arrived, railroad operators are disassembling their snow-removal equipment, assessing how well that equipment functioned and whether repairs or replacements will be necessary for next winter.

SPECTRUM INFRARED

In fall 2011, switch heater manufacturer Spectrum Infrared plans to introduce the "Flat-Jacket Snow-Melter" with "SnapTite Rail Clip" hardware.

The snow-melter's flat design provides greater coverage to the rail surface, according to the company. The product is produced from chemically treated magnesium oxide for added moisture resistance. The snap hardware makes it easy to attach to the rail with simple hand pressure, said Vice President Jay Peet in an e-mail. The company plans to offer the product in three standard lengths — 18-, 26- and 34-foot — each with single-ended terminations and no splice to minimize down time.

Earlier this year, Spectrum updated its latest model of the RRSB Dual-5 Series of forced air track switch heaters to include a three-stage energy management system for blower mode, half heat and full heat. Optional features include a snow detection system that uses both track-mounted and aerial-mounted snow sensors, and a flexible duct extension.