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Winter is Coming House PHL is Prepared to Release the “Snow Jawn”

PHILADELPHIA – Winter is coming—and in the U.S. Mid-Atlantic region, that means snow is coming, too. Whether it be a light dusting or a full-on blizzard, even just a few flakes can disrupt air travel. Philadelphia International Airport (PHL) is prepared to battle the snow, sleet, slush and ice by releasing the... “Snow Jawn” and an army of plows, jet brooms and chem trucks.

“We have 40 million square feet of surface on just runways, taxiways and aprons that require snow removal,” said Keith Brune, PHL’s Chief Operating Officer. “That’s the equivalent to 631 lane miles of snow or the distance from Philadelphia to Lexington, Kentucky. If you add the additional 11.9 million square feet (188 lane miles) of roadways, I-95 ramps and parking lots in and around PHL, that’s a trip to Pensacola, Florida.”

PHL’s 46-piece snow artillery includes 12 Multifunction Plow/Broom Units (MBs) that plow and sweep runways and taxiways at once with their 22-foot plows and 20-foot brooms. The MBs, which cost \$860,000 each, help keep PHL from closing by reducing runway clearance time, providing more capacity for airline travel.

Working in concert with the MBS are two Jet Brooms (JBs), which plow, broom and chemically treat runways and taxiways at the same time. These machines, with 28-foot plows, 20-foot brooms and storage tanks that can hold more than 2,000 gallons of liquid deicing fluid, promote safety—fewer snow removal vehicles are needed operating in adverse conditions. JBs cost \$1.2 million each.

PHL’s Snow Watch cadre works around the clock to keep planes flying and vehicular traffic flowing. Winning the Game of Snow begins long before the flakes fall. “We are always monitoring forecasts to see what type of weather systems are headed our way and then plan accordingly for staffing and having equipment ready to respond,” said Brune. “We have salt trucks for landside roads and chemical trucks to pre-treat surfaces before snow arrives. Once there is more than half-an-inch of wet snow or two inches of dry snow on the runways, we bring out the plow and broom vehicles.”

In keeping with the aviation industry’s tradition of naming aircraft, PHL crews selected moniker for their “battle gear”:

- MBs are: Snow Angel, Ice Wookie, Multifarious, Snowmizer, Snow Slayer, Time Bandit, Arctic Fox, Snow Jawn, Nor’easter, Yeti and Storm Breaker
- JBs are: Terra Hawk and Silver Hawk
- Chemical Trucks are Heatwave, Tropic Breeze and Heatmizer

Philadelphia International Airport is owned and operated by the City of Philadelphia. The Airport is a self-sustaining entity that operates without the use official tax dollars. It is one of the largest economic engines in Pennsylvania, generating an estimated \$16.8 billion in spending to the regional economy and accounting for more than 106,000 jobs.