

# The case for compacts

**BY HEATHER GOOCH**  
Contributor

**T**hese days, compact equipment can vary from four-wheeler ATVs to stand-on skid steers. Even some zero-turn lawn mowers are accommodating a snowplow blade, so you can put summertime equipment to use in the winter. Several models offer a cab attachment to shield drivers from snow and wind.

John Molloy, president and founder of Winter Management in Boston, sees the value of year-round use for his equipment. In addition to nationally distributing professional ice melt products, his firm offers snow and ice removal in the greater Boston metropolitan area.

Molloy's Toro Dingo, a compact stand-on skid steer, clears sidewalks in the winter with its snowblower attachment and aids in landscape construction in the summer. Similarly, his ATV snowplow with a rear liquid tank pulls double duty in the spring for weed control on athletic fields.

"I was looking at it wondering, why can I only use it from March to November?" he recalls of how inspiration first struck. With year-round use, Molloy estimates the two pieces of equipment literally paid for themselves within two seasons. Winter Management's fleet also includes other compact equipment such as various skid-steer models and Bobcat units.

## Purchase considerations

For professionals looking to add a compact vehicle to their fleet lineup, Molloy suggests seeing what machinery is on-hand that can be retrofitted for snow removal. If you decide to purchase new, however, plan on spending anywhere from \$6,000 to \$12,000 – and that doesn't include attachments. To offset cost, he says, first figure out your hourly rate of hand-shoveling.

"Look at what you could bill out for that piece of equipment per hour, and how much faster it is and how much more revenue you could bring in with it," he explains, pointing out that the equipment can last more than a decade with proper maintenance.

When adding a piece of equipment, Molloy adds, research options that can make the equipment more versatile. These can include liquid tanks, sanders, snow plow blades, blowers, spreaders and even broom attachments, which would be a particularly easy sell for slick, brick-paved accounts.

## Care and feeding

Molloy recommends keeping compact equipment "clean, tidy and well-greased. Remember that salt can eat away the metal easily," he says. "We spray

our equipment down with an oil mix and try to keep it so the salt doesn't stick to any metal parts."

Although Molloy notes ramps are a good idea for your truck or trailer to transport compact vehicles, Winter Management opts to store its equipment indoors, on-site at select accounts that are chosen for their proximity to other accounts for easy transfer. The equipment is parked out of public sight, so liability issues are minimized.

"If we leave it on-site with a snow pusher on it, we can have a guy arrive, get to clearing right away and then just stay at the account for the duration of the storm, whereas a pick-up would probably need to be mobilized (throughout the area)," he explains.

Routine maintenance, he says, is another key for maximum lifespan, keeping the machinery well-fueled and out of the elements when not in use: "If we have a week of cold temperatures, we'll go out and start them two or three times to make sure the batteries are still charged."

Beyond the labor savings and the ability to increase your volume with these machines, the best thing about having compact vehicles as part of your fleet lineup just might be this: Hand shoveling

could become a thing of the past. "It will definitely save people's backs," Molloy teases. **SB**



**JOHN MOLLOY**

Published with permission of Snow Business magazine and Questex Media Group Inc., 2006.

