

Gearing Up for Winter Weather in Ground Ops

By Vice President Ground Operations Chris Johnson

Following last winter's operational disruption, we've made great progress strengthening our winter operations program and adding resiliency to our systems in Ground Operations. We've shown we can quickly recover from disruptions thanks to Cohearts working together to serve our Customers and each other. Our Southwest Airlines Operational Philosophy is that we always put Safety first, and moving forward, we'll continue to do that as we execute our [Ops Disruption Action Plan](#) and do our part to keep winning our Customers' trust.

The Ground Ops Leadership Team identified several priorities to ensure we're ready to deliver a reliable operation this winter season for our Employees and for our Customers. While we can't control the weather, we can go into major weather events with confidence in our plan, and that's what we're preparing to do for the 2023-2024 winter operations season.

With deicing as an area of focus for winter operations, we're investing in more deicing trucks, additional staffing and training, and additional deice pads across the network. Check out the updates on the following page for more information on how we'll keep up with deicing activities this winter.



Deicing Trucks

This year, we plan to receive 40-50 new deicing trucks to support the operation, with more coming in 2024 to total 360+ new trucks on order. We have a comprehensive plan to deliver new trucks to locations where they're needed most and reallocate some of our current deicing trucks across the system. A Team of experts worked with Station Leaders to decide where to utilize trucks to best support the operation. Below are the new deicing trucks we're adding this year.

- **Vestergaard Elephant BETA (NEW):** You've heard us talk about evaluating the opportunity to invest in enclosed cab deicing trucks with forced air capability to use in locations with extreme weather. I'm happy to report we've ordered enclosed cab deicing trucks for our BNA, DEN, and MDW Stations, and we're delivering 15 of these new trucks to those stations before the winter season.
- **Vestergaard Elephant MY Lite (NEW):** While there's a benefit to having some enclosed cab deicing trucks in our fleet, we'll still invest in open-bucket trucks that serve our operation well and allow our Employees maximum visibility when working to deice our aircraft. We've selected new open-bucket trucks for several stations to receive and supplement our current fleet.



Deicing Pads

In addition to adding more deicing trucks, we're continuing to secure more deice pads in certain locations. When all carriers are deicing, areas quickly become congested, so we're working to get enough space for Southwest to keep the operation running in cold conditions and increase our throughput (the number of airplanes deiced simultaneously).

We're growing our deice pads at DEN from 6 to 10, and our Airport Affairs Department continues to partner with airport leaders to identify additional space as needed. Our Vestergaard Elephant BETA trucks have an extended boom for more flexibility to clear snow off the aircraft wing while at the gate, even from behind the wing.

Winter Ops Summit

At the end of August, we resumed our Winter Ops Summit event for Ground Ops Winter Operations Leaders to come together in Dallas. We hosted this event regularly before the pandemic, and we're glad to bring Station Leaders back together to share their best practices, learn more about our investments for this winter, and prepare to use lessons learned in future planning.

Leaders can take the tools and resources they received back to stations to share with their Teams, especially our Agents qualified to deice aircraft.

Summer Deicing School

Even though it's still warm and seems like winter is far away, Employees at our winter operations stations began preparing during the summer for frost and cold temperatures. Each year, we qualify new Agents to perform deicing, and a lot goes into the training required to have our full Team up to speed each year. We have station-specific goals for qualifying a set percentage of Ramp Agents for deicing, so we're partnering with Leaders to ensure we have enough People to support deicing needs all winter.

For stations with the new enclosed cab trucks, Agents use simulators to learn the functionality of the trucks so they're prepared to operate them safely and efficiently when a storm comes. Rather than manual controls over the deicing sprayer, joysticks control the sprayers.

Our investments in deicing equipment and training are just one component of how we're gearing up for this winter season. From enhancing ground equipment and technology infrastructure to adjusting staffing for complexity and growth and improving how our Teams work together, we're taking a holistic approach and safely executing our Ops Disruption Action Plan to prepare for the 2023-2024 winter season. And we couldn't do any of this without all our Employees and Leaders working together now to prepare, especially our dedicated Team of Ramp Agents.

Thank you to everyone for continuing to focus on Safety and delivering for our Customers daily. ✈️

