

Making snow plows more visible

“ONE OF THE BIGGEST problems [with snow plows] is being hit from behind,” says Tim Nordholm of Iowa DOT Equipment Services. Typically, these collisions occur because following motorists can't see the plow through the cloud of snow behind it. Increasing the visibility of equipment gives motorists more time to decelerate, reducing the chance of impact.

Make your plow more visible to following motorists by installing retroreflective tape and using bright colors on the back of the plow and related equipment.

Retroreflective tape

Retroreflective tape is required on trailers and semi-tractors, but it can also be installed on snow plows and other vehicles.

The tape sends light from an approaching car's headlamps directly back toward the car's headlamps, making the vehicle more visible to the car's driver, even through a snow cloud.

The Iowa DOT uses red and white (silver) retroreflective tape (DOT C-2), installing it horizontally along the sides of the truck or plow and horizontally along the bottom rear and near the top rear.

“We use the tape strictly for the safety of our drivers and other motorists,” says Nordholm.

In a recent survey conducted by CTRE, only 19 of 61 responding Iowa counties reported using retroreflective tape on their snow plows or trucks.

The tape is relatively inexpensive and can be purchased at auto parts stores and truck stops. The Iowa DOT can provide a diagram for suggested placement of the reflective tape.

Contrasting color

White or gray trucks and/or tanks blend into wintry background colors and all but disappear in snow.

Nordholm suggests that you examine the back of your plow and related equipment to see where more color is needed. Iowa DOT trucks, snow plows, and related equipment are painted orange to contrast sharply with winter's grey colors.

For more information

Contact Tim Nordholm, Iowa DOT, 515-239-1607. •



The camera's flash had the effect of light from headlamps on retro-reflective tape installed on the sides and rear of this vehicle.

