IN EARLY MAY, A GROUP OF 35 WINTER SERVICE PROFESSIONALS GATHERED AT THE MIDLAND HOTEL IN THE HEART OF MANCHESTER CITY CENTRE FOR THE FIRST SURVEYOR COLD COMFORT WINTER SERVICE DEBATE, SPONSORED BY SALT UNION.

Delegates included representatives of both the public and private sector, keen to debate winter maintenance issues, in particular the supply and stocking of salt to treat winter roads. Nick Appleyard, Editor of Surveyor magazine, chaired the event and introduced Mike Broughton, CMP UK Group Commercial Manager, to open proceedings. Mike kicked off the debate with a review of last winter and outlined where Salt Union is as a business. He confirmed that the usual summer re-stock demand has been higher than expected so that we are continuing to mine throughout the summer season. From last summer Salt Union has been stockpiling rock salt at the mine although Mike reminded the audience that in a national severe weather event the country may use up to 194,000 tonnes in just one day.

SUL is continuing to make significant investments to optimise the shaft facilities at Winsford. As the production potential of the mine has been maximised, delegates wanted to know if the transportation of salt away from the mine could be improved. Gary Neiles, CMP UK Supply Chain Manager, explained that with just one road in and one road out of the mine, the possibilities of improvement were limited. Building a motorway spur to the mine for example, as well as being exceedingly expensive, is actually impossible owing to the large number of houses located adjacent to the mine. Building a railhead at the mine is similarly unfeasible. Although some salt is transported by rail, the problems with rail transport are that train operators need a steady, predictable volume and the quantities of salt moved are very variable. Shipping salt is feasible but costly and bad weather can also significantly delay deliveries. Moving salt by road will always present challenges but is still always the quickest and cheapest choice.

All present were in agreement that councils must avoid the temptation to reduce their stock after having an ‘average’ winter in 2011/12. It was agreed that a typical British ‘average’ winter is not necessarily mild throughout and can still be challenging, even without snow events as gritters can still have plenty of turn outs even without periods of prolonged low temperatures and snow. Many delegates felt it is sometimes too tempting to dismiss an average winter as ‘easy’ if there has been no period of crisis.

One topic debated animatedly was the question of how to create and maintain stockpiles in an effective way. Gary Neiles pointed out that back in the mid 1990s Local Authorities tended to hold a lot more salt and consistently managed very challenging conditions. However, over a number of years, stocks were reduced for various reasons, which was a contributory factor to some of the challenges experienced...
DEBATING THE ISSUES – SUPPLYING & STOCKPILING continued from page 1

in recent years. The reality was that in many cases Local Authorities did not hold enough salt. After the challenges of recent extreme winters, many customers have now rectified their situation by re-thinking their stock levels and ordering supplies accordingly.

A question was raised as to whether councils could hold stocks at the Winsford mine. Gary confirmed that this was not really feasible as there is insufficient space and it would be too difficult to administer fairly.

Gary explained that the overwhelming problem in a period of high demand is that the amount of salt being transported from the salt mine is restricted by the number of lorries which can travel in and out in one day without causing long delays and severely impacting the road infrastructure around the mine. Regional stockpiles are clearly a more workable solution with multiple short haul trips made to and from them as needed around the region which they serve, delivering potentially much faster stock replenishment.

There are currently seven strategic stockpiles, totalling just over 400,000 tonnes of salt at ports dotted around the English coast. This is salt imported by the Government for the winter 2010/11 from around the world from locations including Chile, Canada, India, Australia and the Mediterranean. Quayside locations are not covered by environmental regulations but the monthly storage costs are high and storage conditions are not ideal. The Highways Agency has taken 120,000 tonnes but there is a big question mark over what will happen to the remainder. One delegate raised the question that as the Government has strategic stocks of food and fuel – perhaps it should hold similar stock of salt but how much is the right amount for that strategic stock?

It was agreed that with over 145 local authorities all making their own decisions there is still very little joined up thinking over winter resilience. Different areas have different requirements and manage their salt differently – from the size of the salt, whether it is treated or not and how much they use. The size and percentage of network treated varies enormously. Some local authorities have doubled their resilience. Even the new recommended codes of practice are not regional enough and tend to be too generalised. While resentment is caused when prudent Authorities are perceived to be ‘bailing out’ less prudent ones by sharing stocks, it is very tricky to establish ownership over shared stockpiles and there are also issues over location, adequate storage, planning permission, administering fair shares and of course no one wants to build up stockpiles that do not get turned over.

In addition to the debate, Adrian Runacres, Secretary and Technical Advisor to NWRSG gave a short presentation on the work of NWRSG. NWRSG provides research and best practice guidance to improve understanding and delivery of winter service.

He reported that NWRSG is currently working on an easy to follow practical guide with recommendations of salt storage, moisture content, spreader calibration, treatments for snow and ice and extreme cold. He also outlined member benefits and costs, which include the opportunity to shape future best practice guidance and get involved with pro-active working groups.

WINTER 2011/12 – AT A GLANCE
THE MET OFFICE WINTER REVIEW

The UK mean temperature for last winter was 4.5°C, much milder than the last three winters, and comparable with several other mild winters since 2000. December was generally mild, especially across southern areas. After a mostly mild January, the last few days saw the onset of a cold spell that lasted 2 weeks with some sharp frosts and snowfalls, especially over England. Mild weather then returned until the end of February. Over Scotland and Northern Ireland, it was the mildest February since 1998, and one of the mildest on record. Mean temperatures over the UK were 0.6°C above average during December, and 1.3°C above in January and 0.7°C above in February.

Precipitation amounts over the UK were above average during December (134% of average) but below in both January (90%) and February (63%). The UK winter total was very close to average, but there were marked regional variations. The Northern Isles and north-west Scotland received about 130% of normal, but much of east Scotland, eastern, central and southern England recorded less than 75% of normal. In northern and western Scotland, December was one of the wettest in the last 100 years. Many counties in eastern and southern England and eastern Scotland had a dry January and particularly dry February. Over England, it was the driest February since 1998 generally, and East Anglia and Lincolnshire had one of their driest Februarys on record.

Sunshine durations over the UK were close to average during December (108% of average), above in January (135%) and close to average again in February (101%). The UK winter total was somewhat above average. Each month the eastern half of the UK tended to be sunnier than normal and the dullest areas were to the north-west, especially in December and February. Provisionally, eastern England and the Midlands enjoyed one of their sunniest winters on record, whereas Northern Ireland had one of its dullest.
DEEPMOSTORE PROVIDES THE MOST UNIQUE RECORDS MANAGEMENT SERVICES IN THE COUNTRY. FIRST ESTABLISHED 14 YEARS AGO TO UTILISE THE ENORMOUS UNDERGROUND VOID AT WINSFORD ROCK SALT MINE, TODAY AROUND TWO MILLION BOXES ARE SAFELY STORED 150 METRES UNDERGROUND.

The advantages of using worked out areas of the mine as a storage facility are clear – there is no risk from ultraviolet light, vermin or flooding, with stability and security second to none. Importantly, the temperature and humidity levels are totally consistent. What’s more, there is practically unlimited space underground as the mine so far covers over 140 miles of tunnels.

The items stored by DeepStore include important records and documentation for financial institutions, police departments, universities, architects and hospitals as well as treasured paintings, historical records, ancient books and architectural models.

Mike Broughton, CMP UK Group Commercial Manager, explains how the records management system works,

“Working closely with our customers, items received are barcoded, scanned and indexed, ensuring all items are tracked from collection through to being placed into storage and sent back out when the customer requires.”

DeepStore is currently looking to develop two new underground areas at the mine, which would double the current storage capacity. It takes the DeepStore team about three months to fit out a new room with racking, build four hour rated partition walls and install the environmental control and security systems as well as VESDA (Very Early Smoke Detection Apparatus).

DeepStore has a proven track record in providing high quality services at cost effective prices.

In 2004, DeepStore was awarded a fifteen year contract by The National Archives to store several series of records that could no longer be housed within their own facility at Kew. As you would expect with records of this importance, the geological, environmental and security considerations were heavily scrutinised before the contract award and DeepStore continues to be audited against BS5454:2000 on an ongoing quarterly basis. DeepStore’s processes are quality assured to BS EN ISO9001 and are subject to both internal and external audits on a bi-annual basis.

80 staff are employed by DeepStore, with their duties including the collection and transportation of new boxes and deliveries, tracking and retrieving boxes from storage, secure destructions, scanning, electronic document management and providing customer service support.

In addition to the rock salt mine, DeepStore has two surface facilities in the London area, providing a nationwide records management resource.

For more information on DeepStore, contact Mike Broughton by email on michaelbroughton@compassminerals.co.uk or call him on 01606 596527.

“Just for the Record...

The DeepStore storage facility

The smooth transition of records has been managed by DeepStore brilliantly.

DeepStore’s commitment and service was a key strength in their tender process as well as the Online Protocol Service they offer, allowing us to access our data 24 hours a day, 365 days a year."

NICHOLA COURT, ARCHIVIST FOR MODERN RECORDS, THE ROYAL SOCIETY

“We see DeepStore as an extension of our information governance function; the service and level of care and attention they provide is 100% every time.

We know that all our records are in safe hands and we are receiving a great service at great value.

Nothing is ever too much trouble for DeepStore, they’re a great asset to our service."

BOB MCLEAN, INFORMATION GOVERNANCE MANAGER, WELLCOME TRUST

“DeepStore provides a first-class archive storage and retrieval service."

DAVE BRIDGE, RECORDS MANAGER, FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
Q&A

DR NEIL ROSENBURGH, OUR TECHNICAL DEVELOPMENT MANAGER, ANSWERS SOME OF YOUR QUESTIONS ABOUT THE PROS AND CONS OF TREATED SALT VS PRE-WET

Q. What is the difference between treated salt and pre-wet?
A. Treated salt consists of approximately 97% rock salt with the remainder being made up of an ABP (agricultural by-product). Pre-wet is made up of around 70% rock salt with the remainder being brine, a mixture of sodium chloride (white salt) and water.

Q. What is the difference in their performance?
A. Both products result in an increased spreading efficiency and thus reduction in spread rate compared with dry salt. Users have shown that by using treated salt you can reduce your spread rate by between 25 and 30%, using around 7-8 g/m² of treated salt compared with 10 g/m² of dry salt. The performance of pre-wet is very similar.

Q. So does treated salt have any advantages?
Treated salt has all the ease of dry salt and none of the hassle of pre-wet. Treated salt is provided ready blended so there is no need for extra infrastructure or on-going maintenance of saturators. It can be stored (indoors or covered) just as dry salt. Existing spreading vehicles can be utilised without any retro fitting required (recalibration required).

Q. Are there any downsides to using pre-wet?
A. People are often tempted by the fact that pre-wet uses less dry salt but forget that pre-wet then has to be dosed with salt brine which is an added expense. Having to store different materials can be a challenge when suitable storage space is often at a premium. You also need to purchase and allow space for saturators and holding tanks to ensure you have enough brine available. Using pre-wet has been shown to accelerate the corrosion of spreading vehicles.

SALT UNION ADDS FLAVOUR TO SUNDAY SERVICES

Churches across Cheshire celebrated their Sunday morning service with a difference at a special Salt Sunday on May 13th, after Salt Union presented every church holding a Salt Sunday service with a sample of Cheshire rock salt.

The Salt Sunday services, an initiative that brings together business, education, communities and churches to celebrate the contribution that natural resources such as salt, coal and water give to the lives of those in Cheshire, were organised by the Salt of the Earth Network.

On presenting the salt samples to the bishop, Harold James, Managing Director of Compass Minerals UK, said, “Our mine has been a major part of Cheshire’s industrial and cultural heritage since 1844 and today we employ approximately 200 local residents with 75 working underground at any one time. Given this long standing connection, we welcome the opportunity to give something back to the local communities that have played such an important part in the mine’s development.”

GET SET….GO!

Getting into the Olympic spirit of 2012, an intrepid 20-strong team from CMP UK took on the challenge of this year’s BUPA Manchester 10k Run in May.

So far the team has raised over £2,000 for charity - Leukemia & Lymphoma Research, British Heart Foundation, FSID and Hope House Hospices – a wonderful effort for four great causes.

MEMBERS OF THE TEAM ARE AS FOLLOWS:-

Ian Gordon, Keith Pollitt, Lyn Mitchell, Ros Garrity, Gordon Dunn, Nick Newton, Jamie Chellig, Gaynor Bennett, Chris Firth, Phil Johnson, John Brotherton, Alan Wilson, Ruth Pittwood, Kris Reilly, Rosena Rabbitte, Carolyn Dale, Jessica Edge, Angela Jones, Ryan Mitchell and Caroline McAlindon

See us at Cold Comfort, Ricoh Arena, Coventry, Sept 19/20, Stand C12