Organization should start with a careful allocation of highways to each patrol. In fact, in our snow belt we find it wise to build our patrols largely around the snow handling problem. I have attempted to give each patrolman as nearly as possible an equal mileage of east-west roads and north-south roads. One of the group of roads usually suffers less drift, and by this division can wait while the one suffering the greatest cross-wind gets plowed out. Another expedient, which I believe may prove helpful, is to include in each patrol a division of primary and secondary roads. With a limited mileage of primary roads on a given patrol, that patrol can plow these first, and within a reasonable time do justice to its secondary roads. Dividing primary roads among numerous patrols in short stretches has two definite advantages. Probably the greatest advantage comes from an early concentration of a greater number of men and pieces of equipment where keeping the roads open will serve the greatest need. Such division of roads also serves to lessen the burden to adjacent patrols when any particular patrol suffers an equipment failure. The adjacent patrols can move in and absorb a limited mileage of primary roads, keep the heavy streams of traffic moving, and not increase their own mileage unduly. Both these advantages will sometimes fail to offset certain reasons for doing the exact opposite. Putting the primary roads in long sections in the hands of your most outstanding and resourceful patrolmen, equipped with the best trucks and plows at your disposal, will sometimes gain better results. In fact, in our own case we use a combination of both ways in splitting up our primary roads.

Several times last year we found that when the heavier pieces of equipment were most needed they would not run. Since they were stationed in outlaying patrol headquarters, no trucks of sufficient power were available to tow these junks and they would not start. We now operate much of this equipment out of the central garage, under the watchful eye of the garage foreman, who alone can assure that batteries will be fully charged, and the equipment generally nursed to a healthy,
usable condition. This arrangement calls for considerable special planning, as does the use of any equipment not regularly assigned to a particular man.

If all snow were alike, “snow and ice removal” could be reduced to a few simple formulas, an organization could be set up, exactly the right equipment could be procured, and we could blissfully devote our time to making reports and conducting safety meetings. This branch of maintenance cannot be supervised from a centrally located swivel chair. Temperature, humidity, and wind velocity all play leading parts. The temperamental fickleness of the elements can make our success or failure. One time snow comes down as slush on a warm day with the sun shining, only to suddenly turn into ice that may cling to the pavement for weeks. The next dozen times the slush will melt under the warm sun, and any expense incurred in removing it appears extravagant. In the northern part of the state, we consider it good practice to remove snow or ice as soon as possible regardless of what the weather may be at the moment.

It is unsafe to judge the success of our various patrolmen by driving down the road and comparing the results observed. It is not uncommon to find a temperature variation of as much as 10 degrees within a few miles. In fact, ice will be followed by thaw, and the place of change will often be definitely visible as a line across the pavement.

In the use of chemicals, with or without abrasives, results are often unaccountably different. The slushy condition for ideal plowing, obtained by the use of chemical, can and does become a hazard if caught in a rapid drop in temperature before being removed from the pavement. A heavy use of chemical in removing snow, if followed by a period of high humidity, will often cause a seriously slippery condition by the formation of frost.

When all is said and done, too much stress cannot be put on the thinking ability of the individual patrolmen. Conversations between superintendent and patrolmen which provoke thinking can always be beneficial, and it is surprising how often the superintendent profits most from such conversations. If I were to offer any advice, it would be to know your men and how they think. Know wherein their conclusions and conduct would differ from your own, if you were the one actually doing the work. If you are satisfied you have some constructive ideas that would aid them, “be there” at the opportune time. A good idea is usually easy to sell if presented at the proper time. Be available and approachable. In the next big argument that arises between your patrolman and yourself, you may learn something.