

These hate potholes more than drivers

N.J. enlists 6 machines as part of new \$15 million repair job

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New Jersey has declared war on motorists' most annoying and intractable springtime foe — the bone-jarring, chassis-chafing pothole.

Yesterday, officials introduced the latest weapon in their arsenal — a snout-nosed, potbellied truck with the ominous-sounding name of "pothole killer."

With one of the odd-looking vehicles lurking behind him, state Transportation Commissioner Jack Lettiere announced a \$15 million campaign to repair potholes following a snowy, icy winter that has left the state's roads and highways scarred with tire-thumping divots.

"We've had the worst winter in years in New Jersey and we've seen the effects," Lettiere said during a news conference at a Department of Transportation maintenance yard in Secaucus. "As night follows day, potholes follow snow and ice. And other than traffic jams, motorists hate potholes more than anything."

The commissioner said 100 DOT crews already have used some 600 tons of patch material to repair potholes since February.

The program includes \$2.5 million for the temporary pothole repairs, \$2 million for more permanent repairs later in the spring, \$4.5 million to replace larger sections of pavement where there are clusters of potholes and a \$6 million emergency road resurfacing program for stretches of roadway where

lesser repairs would not suffice. Most of the work will be done on nights and weekends.

Lettiere said the \$15 million, which will come from the DOT's operating budget and state Transportation Trust Fund, represents the largest state expenditure on pothole repair since the harsh winter in 1996, when the state spent \$40 million. That amount, he added, included \$15 million to \$20 million for the state's normal spring road resurfacing, which will continue this year. The DOT intends to award the road repair and resurfacing contracts by May, the commissioner added.

Lettiere said the assault on potholes will employ six "pothole killers" the DOT is leasing through May from Patch Management Inc. in Bensalem, Pa., at a cost of about \$6,000 to \$7,000 apiece.



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A "pothole killer" is demonstrated yesterday in Secaucus. The state is paying \$6,000 to \$7,000 to rent each of the machines.

The machine is manned by a driver and operator, who do not have to get out of the vehicle to fix the pothole.

A long arm with a spout extending from the front of the truck drives up to a pothole in the road, blows air to clean out loose debris and then covers the hole with what Lettiere described as a sticky "tack coat" of tar emulsion. The spout then fills the hole with a mixture of small crushed stone and a tarlike substance.

Lettiere encouraged motorists to report potholes on a toll-free DOT hotline, 1-800-POTHOLE (768-4653), or by logging on to the DOT Web site at www.njdot.nj.gov.

Secaucus Mayor Dennis Elwell, the owner of N.H. Elwell & Sons trucking, lauded the state's attack on potholes.

"To some people a pothole is just a nuisance. But I can tell you as someone who owns a trucking company, it is more than that," Elwell said, citing the expense of replacing tires and repairing vehicles damaged by potholes.