

SMALL BUSINESS

Snow removal firms ready to hit the streets

Not everyone dreads Minnesota snow.

Written By: Jeff Kiger | Dec 29th 2020 - 6pm.



Kurt Oelkers, owner of Oelkers Lawn Care in rural Byron, said he's ready for snow. Tuesday, Dec. 29, 2020. (Ken Klotzbach / kklotzbach@postbulletin.com)

While most businesses and homeowners have been happy Southeast Minnesota hasn't seen much snow this winter, local plow and shovel crews are saying, "Let it snow."

"We're ready to go," said [Darend Yetter](#), who owns Ground Control in Rochester. "We've been anxiously waiting ... It might be a late winter ... we could get snow in April."

It has been a slow season so far for snow removal crews like Ground Control and Oelkers Lawn Care. They were making plans Tuesday to hit the streets for the snow predicted to hit the area.

"You can only do so much maintenance on the equipment. Snow removal is what pays the bills," said Kurt Oelkers, owner of Oelkers Lawn Care in rural Byron.

There's still hope for a busy winter, since the snowiest months are usually January, February and March.

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In addition to the usual unpredictability of the weather, COVID-19 has added another challenge.

“There has definitely been a COVID trickle-down effect,” Oelkers said.

Businesses and homeowners associations have less money to spend on services like snow removal. Some are asking for lower rates or shifting to cheaper firms.

“They are pinching their pennies, just like us,” he said.

However, snow is still the main issue. Whenever it falls, Yetter and Oelkers will have crews out plowing streets and clearing sidewalks in the dark of early morning. It’s easier to clear the snow without dodging commuters and customers.

“We like to get our properties done and get home,” Yetter said. “It’s nice when customers wake up in the morning and the property is already done. It’s better for everybody.”