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GREATER FORT WAYNE  
**Business Weekly**

Friday, December 02, 2005

# Let it snow: Local airport's ready

*By Bill Gisel*



DeKalb County Airport employee Gene Powell operates the airport's new New Holland tractor, using a 14-foot blade with wings that open to clear a 21-foot swath of snow. The tractor was delivered to the airport this week, along with a snow blower and tracked Bobcat. Before acquiring its own equipment, the airport contracted for snow removal. (Bill Gisel)

AUBURN — The biggest share of new snow removal equipment purchased by the DeKalb County Airport arrived this week, just in time for a tryout in Thursday's snowfall.

Airport maintenance employee Gene Powell "played" with the New Holland TV145 articulating tractor — sporting a 14-foot snow blade — for a time Thursday morning. He and airport manager Russ Coachman are the main operators and were appreciating the snow to help familiarize themselves with the tractor and its equipment.

The \$75,000 machine also has a snow blower, purchased along with a winged blade for \$9,500, for moving large accumulations of snow and drifts.

Still to be delivered is a broom and blower apparatus that will be operated from a former county highway department dump truck.

Couchman said the broom will quickly sweep snow down to the pavement without damaging the airport's grooved runway, with the truck operated at up to 40 mph on the mile-long



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runway. The tractor will be used mostly for snow removal from taxiways and hangar ramps; it has a top speed of only 18 mph.

In past years, the airport has contracted for snow removal operations, which can become quite costly depending on the severity of winter weather. Buying the new equipment should save money in the long run, Couchman said. However, the purchase was prompted by the need to be able to remove snow as required by the Federal Aviation Administration for a new instrument landing system now in operation at the airport.

The FAA requires that an airport with an ILS and between 10,000 and 40,000 flight operations a year be able to remove 1 inch of snow from its main runway, taxiways and main terminal ramp within three hours, according to Couchman. The DeKalb Airport has more than 10,000 operations a year.

Another piece of equipment purchased by the airport is a Bobcat equipped with rubber tracks. The Bobcat will be used for snow-moving operations with an 80-inch clamshell bucket. It also will be used for landscaping and mowing with a rough-cut mower attachment. Because the airport also maintains a number of homes it has purchased to ensure future airport expansion, the Bobcat also will be used for previously contracted landscaping work.

Before buying the new equipment, the airport had only a pickup truck with a snow blade for snow removal.

Proceeds from a recent sale of \$2 million in revenue bonds are funding the equipment purchases. The Bobcat cost \$45,600; the highway department truck \$13,000; and the snow broom and blower \$119,500.

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