

Road crews dread fall: 'We hate leaf season'

In Buffalo, put leaves in clear or paper bags

By Barbara O'Brien

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Leaves will be falling soon, and if you don't like raking them, it's not always fun picking them up at the curb, either.

"We hate leaf season," said Cheektowaga Highway Superintendent Mark Wegner, who added that it's a short season but the phone doesn't stop ringing. "It has to get done in like four weeks, because then the snow is coming."

Whether they're in bags – an option that Amherst officials are encouraging and which is the rule in Buffalo – or loose on the curb, leaves are picked up in many municipalities every year.

If it's a really nice weekend, the whole town rakes, Wegner said. Many homeowners want the leaves picked up as soon as they're at the curb. And he hears from residents upset that the wind blows the leaves back on the grass.

"We can't do the town in one day," Wegner said. "We try to get them up and off as fast as we can."

Cheektowaga has eight leaf vacuums, two crews with a backhoe and a sanitation truck plus a blitz crew. Leaves are picked up the day after the regular refuse pickup.

Kenmore streets crews also use a large vacuum to suck the leaves off the curb. Kenmore doesn't want leaves in bags between the sidewalks and curb.

"We prefer you just rake them up and leave them in that area," said Assistant Public Works Superintendent Jim Scholl.

But bags are fine in Erie County's two largest municipalities.

They want you to "Bag It See **Leaves** on Page **B10**

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LEAVES • from B1 Buffalo," and Amherst is recommending biodegradable bags if residents want leaves picked up on the regularly scheduled refuse day. Otherwise, "it may take us a week, 10 days to get there," according to Amherst Highway Superintendent Pat Lucey.

But that might not be the best option in the northern part of town with large lawns with lots of trees, he said.

"It's pretty impractical to put out 50 or 60 bags at a time," Lucey said.

Buffalo has long required leaves to be placed in bags, and this year came out with the Bag It Buffalo campaign.

a hazard for motorists in the road.

And for those who hate bagging leaves, "If there's not a lot of leaves, you can just mow them back into the lawn. That is good for the lawn and the environment as a whole," Finn said.

Buffalo leaves must be placed in clear or paper bags, and there is no limit on the number that can be put at the curb.

The key is not to use dark or black bags, because crews don't know if the bag contains leaves or garbage, said Michael J. Finn, acting commissioner of the Department of Public Works, Parks & Streets.

"We pick them up as our operation allows throughout the season, we structure our operation as the leaves fall," Finn said.

The idea in Buffalo and elsewhere is to keep loose leaves from clogging street drains, or from becoming



"If it's a really nice weekend, the whole town rakes," said Cheektowaga Highway Superintendent Mark Wegner. Robert Kirkham/News file photo