

WHETHER THE WEATHER AFFECTS US



The last thing you'll be thinking about while reading this article is the past winter's weather.

Because it was such a long and severe season the homebuilding industry will be feeling its impact for the balance of 2014.

Believe it or not, the prolonged cold and heavy snowfalls had some positive impact on progress for some in our industry. For example, our company, Geranium Corporation, is involved in a major excavation and hauling program at the Friday Harbour resort development on Lake Simcoe, south of Barrie. The fact that the ground remained hard for many weeks at a time meant fewer days that the trucks weren't working.

Builders typically create their construction schedules to include non-working days due to bad weather. However, this year builders with highrise condominiums under construction may find they are beyond what they've allowed in their construction programs. Crane operators are not able to work in high winds and frigid temperatures and there were many of those days this winter.

On both lowrise and highrise sites, construction workers are sent home if the outside temperature falls below minus 10C with a wind-chill factor. Carpenters and bricklayers, who work outdoors, cannot perform their jobs while wearing gloves. For other trades, weather is less of an issue if they are working inside a house that is sealed

and has exterior materials completed.

The amount of snow on the ground also affects our construction schedules. If a site is operating at good activity levels, then there will likely be equipment and labour to help clear access routes. "We can work if we can get to the house," says Louie Morizio, Geranium's vice president of construction.

Ice is also an issue for some tradespeople as they may have to spend a significant amount of their workday preparing materials; for example, clearing snow from sub-floor panels stored outside before they can start their work. Geranium typically allows one lost day per week during winter construction; this adds up to about one extra month to build a house in winter. This year we've lost a lot of time.

Like other new homebuilders, Geranium will be looking at available measures to make up for lost time and get our building programs back on track. This could mean running extra site shifts on Saturdays, increasing the number of crews and overlapping different trades inside the houses. Not all of these are ideal solutions and they may not all be possible depending on the site, builder and trades involved. We'll have to weigh what will be gained against the potential downside and decide on a project-by-project basis.

On the whole you'll find that new homebuilders strive to deliver their homes on time, well aware of the anxiety experienced when moving dates are delayed. Weather is just one of the many balls we juggle in our business.

Bad winter weather can add another month to the time it takes to construct a house.



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