

Snow and Ice Management Policy for City Maintained Streets, Alleys, Sidewalks and Bike Trails

I. Purpose:

This policy provides definitions and details on the planned procedures utilized by the Public Works Department to address snow and ice control on City-maintained streets, alleys, sidewalks and trails. The goal of this policy is to provide an effective and efficient approach and response to snow removal in order to provide safe travel for the greatest number of people. The policy outlines the responsibilities and priorities within the Public Works department in order to accomplish this goal.

II. Objectives:

The City provides snow and ice control to allow travel of emergency vehicles, public transit, motorists and modes of alternative transportation. The goal of the City is to provide surface conditions that are safe for travel in consideration of surrounding conditions and circumstances. Overall, the snow and ice control policy is designed to provide the best use of limited resources to maximize the movement of traffic during winter weather. There are many factors balanced within this policy including public and personnel safety, budget and our environment.

III. Operations:

The Infrastructure Maintenance Manager or designee(s) will determine when to begin snow and/or ice control operations. There are many contributing factors that are evaluated when determining when to begin operations, work hours and crew size including but not limited to:

- Forecasted weather predictions including snowfall, ice accumulation, wind and pavement temperatures
- Forecasted start, end and duration of the event
- Forecasted weather conditions prior to and following the event
- Day of the week and time of day (weekend, vs. weekday, rush hours, etc.)

The Infrastructure Maintenance Manager shall retain the latitude to adjust sequencing or route assignments based on storm conditions, equipment availability and/or other conditions warranting changes.

A. Definition of Priorities

The streets and alleys within Rochester are prioritized based primarily on traffic volume.

- Priority 1 – Arterial and Collector Roads. These are high-traffic main roadways with a high traffic volume and higher probability of accidents. These are also critical to provide access for emergency services.
- Priority 2 – Local Roads, Transit Routes, School Zones, Hills. These are main residential thru streets which lead to arterial and collector roads as well as City transit routes, steep hills and areas around schools.
- Priority 3 – Cul-de-Sac Streets, Alleys and Dead Ends. These streets have the lowest traffic volume.

The sidewalks and bike trails within Rochester are prioritized based primarily on traffic volume.

- Priority 1 – High Pedestrian Traffic Areas, Central Business District, Transit Areas, Safe Routes to School
- Priority 2 – Medium to Low Traffic Areas & Park Properties

B. Snow and Ice Control on Streets

1. Partial Plow

For icing conditions, spotty slippery spots or snow accumulations generally less than 2", a partial crew will respond. Only priority 1 and 2 streets will be plowed. Streets that are plowed will likely not be cleared to full width. Cul-de-sac bulbs will not be fully cleared. A partial plow can generally be accomplished in less than 8 hours, depending upon snowfall conditions, duration of the storm, etc.

2. Full Plow

For snow accumulation of approximately two inches or more of snow, a full plow event will likely occur. During the storm while snow is still accumulating, a partial crew will focus on keeping priority 1 and 2 streets plowed. Once the snowfall ceases, a full plow will begin. Plowing will begin on priority 1 and 2 streets and once complete to full width will continue on to priority 3 streets. A full plow can generally be accomplished in less than 12 hours after the cessation of snowfall, depending upon snowfall conditions, duration of the storm, etc. For snow events with approximately 6 inches or more of snow, the goal is to have all streets opened up with at least one plow pass on the first day of plowing with full width plowing completed the following day. Residents and property owners should expect multiple plow passes during and after a full plow event.

3. Central Business District

The Central Business District is Rochester's main downtown area and is roughly defined to be south of Civic Center Dr, west of 3 Ave E, north of 6 St SW and east of 6 Ave W. Within the Central Business District, there is often no boulevard space to place snow and it must be hauled out periodically – typically after each snowfall in excess of 3", or after multiple smaller snowfalls. This work is performed during the overnight hours and takes 2 to 4 days to complete depending upon the accumulation. The pickup of the Central Business District will not begin until all other streets have been cleared to their full width. Snow that is picked up is hauled to one of many snow dump sites the City utilizes.

4. Snow Plowing Streets

Snow shall be plowed in a manner as to minimize traffic obstructions. The center of the roadway will be plowed first. The snow shall then be pushed from left to right with discharge going into the boulevard area of the right of way. For full plow events, plows will make multiple passes down each street over the course of the event to get them to their full width. Residents may have to shovel the end of their driveway multiple times if they are out before the street has been plowed to full width. Plow trucks are not able to turn their blades and residents should expect and plan ahead for a large quantity of snow at the end of their driveway after a moderate to heavy snowfall. The City is not responsible for cleaning private driveways or sidewalks.

5. Snow Plowing Within Cul-de-Sacs

Cul-de-sacs are challenging areas to plow. Cul-de-sacs typically have little space to store snow from these large paved areas due to the number of driveways, light poles, hydrants etc. The goal is to distribute snow as evenly as possible around the whole cul-de-sac or alternatively pile the snow in the middle of the cul-de-sac if space allows. However, heavy snows, icy conditions, etc. can make it difficult to maneuver the plow trucks and may result in some driveways receiving more snow than others. Residents living in cul-de-sacs should expect to have more snow to remove than a typical driveway as there is additional paved area that must be cleared within a cul-de-sac versus a normal street. Residents may also experience some restriction in the width of the end of their driveway as snow piles accumulate throughout the winter. As snow accumulates in cul-de-sacs, the Public Works Department may decide to periodically load and haul out the plowed snow to maintain access to driveways and for maneuvering of emergency vehicles and maintenance equipment. The removal of this snow is done in an efficient manner by geographic area within the City and is at the discretion of the Infrastructure Maintenance Manager.

C. Snow and Ice Control on Trails & Sidewalks

A portion of the City's public sidewalks and recreational trails are maintained throughout the winter months – it is not practical to maintain the entire network. Additionally, some of the network is used during the winter for recreational activities that require snow cover on the trails (cross country skiing, snowshoeing, etc). The Pedestrian and Bicycle Advisory Committee provides input and recommendations on trails maintained during the winter. A map is updated each year identifying which sidewalks and trails are maintained by the City. All private sidewalks and trails are the responsibility of the property owner to maintain as per City ordinance. The City strives to clear all priority 1 and 2 trails within 24 hours of the end of snowfall. However, heavy snowfall, high winds or other conditions may cause delays. In these circumstances, priority 1 sidewalks and trails will be cleared first before beginning priority 2 sidewalks and trails. Outside of the Central Business District, trails and sidewalks are not treated with sand or salt. Please use caution, wear appropriate footwear and remember that trail conditions are often inconsistent due to sun exposure, temperatures and usage.

D. Use of Salt, Sand and Chemicals

The City may use salt, sand and other chemicals to treat streets and alleys when hazardous winter driving conditions are present or forecasted. While public safety is the top priority, many other factors including environmental impacts, cost and weather conditions are all balanced within the treatment approach. Application of deicer chemical(s) is generally limited to priority 1 and 2 routes, steep hills and high volume intersections. Application is limited on lower volume streets and cul-de-sacs. Knowing the long term environmental impacts that deicing chemicals can cause, their usage is limited wherever and whenever possible.

E. Pre-Treating

As weather conditions allow, priority 1 and 2 streets, bridges, steep hills and concrete roadways may be pre-treated with a salt brine or similar solution prior to forecasted snowfall. Pre-treatment of streets can be performed prior to forecasted snowfall and helps prevent snow from bonding/compacting to the roadway.

F. Suspension of Operations

Snow and ice control operations will be conducted only when weather conditions do not endanger the safety of City employees and equipment. Factors that may temporarily suspend snow and ice control operations include heavy snowfall, severe cold, significant winds, and limited visibility. Operations will generally be suspended after equipment operators have worked a maximum of 16 hours in a 24 hour period to provide necessary time for rest. In the event operations are temporarily suspended due to hazardous conditions, the City will still provide access for emergency fire, police and medical services. Any decision to suspend operations shall be made by the Infrastructure Maintenance Manager and shall be based on weather conditions.

IV. Property Damage

A. Mailboxes

Mailbox damage is an unfortunate consequence of snowplowing. The public works department will inspect each mailbox damage claim. If there is physical evidence that the mailbox was struck by a plow, the property owner has two options:

- The city will replace the mailbox with a standard mailbox and (if necessary) a 4x4 decay resistant post in conformance with USPS guidelines.
- The owner can replace the mailbox and/or post and the city will reimburse up to the amount listed in the current fee schedule. The new mailbox and installation shall comply with USPS guidelines.

Mailboxes properly constructed and installed according to [USPS guidelines](#) should be able to hold up to the snow coming off the plow. If the mailbox was not damaged from direct contact with the plow, a letter will be left indicating some potential causes of the mailbox damage and the city will not repair or replace the mailbox and post. Mailbox damage must be reported by May 15, annually.

Residents are responsible for keeping the area in front of their mailboxes clear for USPS deliveries.

B. Boulevard/Right of Way Damage

Plow operators make every effort to avoid damage to boulevard areas while performing snow removal. This can be especially tricky in areas with no curb or drive over style curb. The boulevard area on most streets is part of the City right-of-way which extends approximately 10 to 15 feet behind the curb. The intent of the right of way is to provide room for snow storage, utilities and sidewalks. Lawns that are scraped or gouged by City equipment will be repaired by top dressing and seeding. Residents are required to assist by watering the areas that are repaired. Other items in the right-of-way including landscape timbers, shrubs, flowers, other landscaping, sprinkler heads, etc. will not be repaired by the City. Boulevard damage must be reported by May 15, annually.

C. Garbage Cans

Per City ordinance, "containers shall be placed adjacent to but not in the traveled portion of the right of way". Containers should be placed in the driveway or boulevard and promptly removed once collected (within 24 hours of collection). It is the responsibility of the resident to make sure containers are located so as to not interfere with snow removal. Damaged or tipped over containers as a result of improper placement are not the responsibility of the City to repair/cleanup.

V. Parking

Parked vehicles severely restrict snow removal operations resulting in lower efficiency, higher cost and more inconvenience to everyone. Residents with access to off-street parking are strongly advised to use it throughout the winter months. City-wide parking restrictions are outlined in City ordinance. The Police Department is responsible for all parking enforcement.

VI. Private Snow Removal

Both City ordinance and Minnesota state statutes prohibit plowing, shoveling, blowing or placing snow onto public roadways or right of ways. The boulevard and right-of-way areas are intended for snow storage from public roadways and private sidewalks within the right of way. Property owners are prohibited from pushing snow from parking lots, driveways or other private areas into this space. Additionally, property owners are prohibited from placing snow in drainage ditches as well as drainage or utility easements adjacent to or within their property. Placing snow in a drainage ditch or drainage or utility easement will result in an assessable fine and, if not promptly removed by the property owner, will be removed by the City as per the hourly rates listed in the City fee schedule and assessed to the property owner in addition to the fine.

VII. Conditions Which May Affect This Policy

Winter weather is often unpredictable with ever-changing conditions. The following conditions may impact the goals and procedures stated within the policy:

- Vehicles disabled in deep snow
- Illegally parked vehicles, or vehicle parked in a way that restricts or prevents access. Those streets will be assigned a lower priority and re-visited as time allows.
- Weather conditions so severe as to cause crews to be pulled off the streets (i.e. whiteout conditions, severe ice, etc.)
- Unforeseen emergencies
- Equipment breakdown

VIII. Other Considerations:

This policy is a guide for the snow and ice control services provided by the City, with public safety as the top priority. Together we are all responsible for keeping Rochester safe for winter travel. The City encourages and expects that City residents and other members of the traveling public will conduct their activities mindful of conditions, hazards, and what is necessary to remain safe. The travelling public needs to expect some level of inconvenience during winter weather and will be expected to modify their driving practices to adapt to road conditions. Drivers need to use due care when driving in snow and ice conditions, including reducing their speed to below the posted speed limit, increasing following distances, allowing extra time to reach destinations, etc.

IX. Coordination with Other Jurisdictions

The City is responsible for snow and ice control only on City owned streets. However, there are roadways within the City limits that are the responsibility of others to maintain such as the county, state, township and private ownership.

The City may coordinate with neighboring or regional jurisdictions as warranted. These exceptions are governed by maintenance agreements as agreed upon by all involved parties.