

Division of Highways & Maintenance Snow and Ice Policy

Adopted by the Board of Selectmen on January 9, 2006

Revised & Adopted by Board of Selectmen on February 21, 2006

Background

Winter weather on Cape Cod is difficult to predict. There are many variables affecting winter maintenance operations such as type of precipitation, air and pavement temperature, traffic, wind, time of day and day of week. Winter maintenance is as much an art as it is a science.

The snow removal and ice control policy has been based for many years on the goal of obtaining bare and dry pavements at the earliest practical time following cessation of a storm. It is virtually impossible to provide bare pavement during a winter storm and the Division of Highways & Maintenance does not attempt to do so. Judgment based on experience is essential in conducting and timing remedial work to overcome ice and snow hazards. As each storm situation varies, it is important to emphasize that this policy is used as a guideline to assist foremen in making well informed, judgment decisions in the exercise of their snow removal and ice control responsibilities.

Mission Statement

When a snow or ice event occurs, it shall be the objective of the Division of Highways & Maintenance to make sure that the streets of Harwich are passable for vehicular traffic as soon as possible, in a safe and efficient manner. The safety of the public and the personnel shall be of the highest priority at all times.

Responsibilities

The Division of Highways and Maintenance is responsible for removing snow from 471 public roads, 24 county roads, and 346 private roads, totaling approximately 200 miles.

Additionally, the Division plows Town facilities and parking lots including the Police Department, Fire Headquarters, East Harwich Fire Station #2, Town Hall, Schools, Brooks Library, Brooks Academy, Community Center, old Recreation Building, all cemeteries, Saquatucket, Wychmere, and Allen Harbor parking lots, Schoolhouse Municipal Parking Lot, and other areas as required.

Headquarters

The Town's snow and ice removal program is coordinated from the Snow Desk inside the Division of Highways & Maintenance's headquarters located at 273 Queen Anne Road. The telephone number is 508-430-7555.

Authorities

Normal chain of command and lines of authority are applicable during snow and ice storms unless a state of emergency is declared, in which case the Town's Emergency Management Director coordinates and controls all snow and ice removal functions. Absent a declaration of a state of emergency, the Division of Highways & Maintenance

Director is responsible for all snow and ice removal activities. Supervisors are responsible for providing the direction required for effective snow and ice removal operations. Dedication and teamwork will be utilized to the fullest extent possible to maximize the safety and efficiency of all operations.

Telephone List

A current telephone list of the entire Division work force shall be available and updated as necessary and filed with each supervisor responsible for snow and ice removal. The Police Department has cell phone numbers and a pager number for contacting the on call supervisor.

Call in Procedures

During normal working hours, the observations of Division of Highways & Maintenance employees, and/or the Police Department, may alert the first response for snow and ice removal. After normal business hours, the Police Department may contact a supervisor regarding street conditions. The on call supervisor then assesses street conditions to determine the level or response, if any, necessary.

Call in procedures will be conducted in accordance with current labor agreement guidelines and emergency provisions. All Division employees, including Highway, Disposal, Park, Cemetery and Building Maintenance, are subject to duty during snow and ice events. When a response only requires treating the roads with materials, the supervisor will contact the appropriate number of Division employees directly. When conditions require a full response (all Division Staff and Private Contractors), office staff will be called in to assist the supervisor with calling in contractors, coordinating activities and answering the phone.

In addition to Division staff, the Town has approximately 50 contractors retained for snow removal activities, as allowed under Chapter 84, Section 5A of the Massachusetts General Laws (MGL). The retaining of private contractors for the purpose of snow and ice removal by municipalities is exempt from contract and procurement law under Chapter 30B, Section 1B(17) of the MGL. Contractors are required to provide the Town with a Certificate of Insurance, naming the Town of Harwich as Certificate Holder and must carry at least the minimum liability coverage recommended by the Town's Insurance Advisory Committee.

Equipment

The Division of Highways & Maintenance utilizes all the assets of the department as needed to address snow and ice emergencies. The following list represents current Division vehicles used for snow and ice removal.

- 6 six-wheel dump trucks with sanders and plows
- 4 one-ton dump trucks with sanders and plows

- 5 other pickups and one-ton dumps with plows
- 3 front end loaders with plows
- 1 front end loader to load materials

In addition to Town owned vehicles, the Division has approximately 50 private contractors whom the Division can utilize when conditions warrant. All contractors must attend a preseason snow meeting where they receive a short briefing and a copy of the Hired Equipment Snow Removal Policy (Attachment A). Contractors are required to provide a certificate of insurance, copy of their current registration and license and contact and cell phone information. The Division's Vehicle Maintenance Department inspects all private contractor vehicles to ensure that each is functioning properly and safely. Vehicles that fail inspection will not be allowed to plow.

Communications

All Division vehicles are equipped with low band radios capable of transmitting and receiving on a frequency of 37.94. Each vehicle is assigned a unique call number and is capable of communicating with the base unit located at Division of Highways & Maintenance. All private contractors are required to have a working cell phone before being allowed to commence work.

Routes

The Division has divided the Town into 10 sanding routes for Town owned equipment that can be augmented with private sanders as needed. There are 45 plowing routes that are assigned to both Division equipment and private contractors. Routes on main roads and collector roads are performed in tandem to increase efficiency of the removal process. A list of all routes and assigned personnel and equipment is contained in the Snow Plow Routes book located at the snow desk. Every contractor is supplied with a route sheet and is required to have it when reporting for duty. All Town owned equipment has a route list in each vehicle.

Snow and Sanding Operations

The following is a general description of how the Division of Highways & Maintenance plows/sands Town roads:

1. When the snow or ice storm begins, the Division responds by salt/sanding the main roads, bus routes (during school day), hills and secondary roads. Salt/sanding these roads serves two purposes; to keep traffic moving, to make sure our school buses can transport children home and to prevent the snow from bonding to the pavement, also known as snow pack. It should be noted that salt has a much slower effect on melting snow and ice at temperatures below 25 degrees, and may not be applied until it is warmer.
2. Snow plowing begins when snow is predicted to accumulate greater than three (3) inches. The Town begins by calling in its forces to begin plowing mains and secondary

roads. Over 70 town and private plows can be called out, as needed, and assigned to pre-determined plow routes. The Town's policy is to plow the full width of the street, curb to curb, during each storm. On main and secondary roads the normal procedure is to operate plow trucks in teams. Team plowing consists of two plows operating simultaneously to provide for the rapid removal of snow from centerline to curb in one pass. All other roads will normally be plowed with a single plow unit making multiple passes in each direction to clear the road of accumulating snow from curb to curb.

Once snowfall has stopped and plowing is winding down, salt/sanding operations resume to perform post-storm sanding. Main and secondary roads, hills, along with school bus routes are salt/sanded in an attempt to achieve bare pavement conditions. Residential streets and cul-de-sacs will be assessed to determine if salt/sanding is necessary.

Priorities

During snow/ice conditions, calls from the Police and Fire Departments regarding accidents, medical or other emergency situations are given top priority. Upon request of the appropriate agency, the Division of Highways & Maintenance will provide assistance as necessary. Because of the high priority assigned to snow and ice control, almost all other Division operations become secondary to snow fighting operations.

Streets will be plowed and sanded according to established priorities. Priorities are set based upon traffic volume, public safety, and access to emergency facilities and schools. During major storms, crews will plow and sand continuously prior to high volume traffic hours. Depending upon the type and intensity of the storm, plowing operations may be suspended during peak traffic hours to devote maximum effort to sanding operations to provide better traction. Plowing operations will resume after peak traffic hours.

- “Priority one” roads, which are the main arteries of the Town, are given first priority to maintain since they provide the interconnecting link from all corners of the Town. Priority may be extended to school bus routes in cases of early dismissal. Once completed, those bus routes will fall back to their designated priority list.
- “Priority two” roads, which are the secondary roadways that connect to main roads and major residential areas and hilled roadways, are given second priority so as to move traffic from the main streets to small residential sections.
- “Priority three” roads are all local roads within residential areas. The Town will plow local roads when contracted snowplows (full response) are called in. There may be cases when priority three roads receive no service due to financial considerations.

The goal of the Division is to open all streets as quickly as possible and keep them open throughout the storm. After heavy storms all roads will be pushed back to as close to the curb as possible and corners widened. Since the Town uses many classes of snow plow vehicles it is sometimes necessary to have larger equipment go back after each heavy storm to push these roads back. Residents need to be aware that

snow will be pushed into driveways in these cases and the Department will not be responsible for, nor will the Department clear driveways.

Incomplete Subdivision Roads

No Subdivision roads will be plowed until all covenants and performance guarantees have been released by the Planning Board and meet the minimum standards for private roads.

Private Road Snow Removal Policy

The following minimum standards were **adopted by the Board of Selectmen on October 6, 2003** to prevent damage to Town equipment during snow and ice conditions. If private roads do not meet these requirements by the winter of FY 05, plowing and sanding services will not be provided.

The travel lane for any private road shall be no less than ten (10) feet wide. Roadside clearance of any obstacles including vegetation shall be no less than two (2) feet either side.

Height clearance shall be no less than fourteen (14) feet from the road.

There must be ample room for emergency vehicles to turn around if the road is a dead end.

- Paved or unpaved private roads shall have no defects (potholes or ruts) exceeding two (2) inches in depth.
- All private ways shall have a visible street sign.
- Yearly inspections of all private roadways will be performed by this department each September. Property owners will be notified as to the repairs required to bring their roads into compliance.

The Highway Department will, upon request, re-inspect a failed road after improvements have been completed to ensure that it complies with these standards. If the road passes reinspection, plowing and sanding services will resume.

Damage to Private Property

It should be noted that the municipality is not held responsible for damage to private property that is located within the public right of way. The right of way (ROW) is often 50' wide, and is often confused by property owners as their own property. In most cases, the ROW often extends 10 to 20 feet of either side of the paved or gravel road. Some homeowners often cultivate extensions of their lawns, place mailboxes, erect fences or stone walls in these areas, which improve the appearance of the street greatly, but are obstructive to good maintenance from being conducted on the roadway.

The snow windrow must be pushed back as far as possible for many reasons such as:

1. Traffic safety
2. Space for future snow storage
3. Prevention of melting snow water from running onto the pavement
4. To permit maximum possible view of traffic of the roads

Mailboxes located within road limits exist by sufferance only with the responsibility assumed by the owner. It is not possible for the Town to replace or repair any type of structure erected by an abutting land owner within the right-of-way that has been damaged as a result of highway maintenance or construction work. In the event of personal property damage, the Town of Harwich will only be responsible to repair or replace damaged property having been in actual contact with the snow removal equipment that is on private property and not within the public right-of-way.

Complaints

Plowing snow from Harwich's 200 miles of public and private roads, including numerous Town owned facilities, is a formidable task. It involves coordinating nearly 70 pieces of privately and publicly owned plows, route supervisors, plow operators and other support personnel. The hours can be extremely long, with operations conducted during the most severe weather and driving conditions. We realize that in an operation of such size and complexity there are bound to be complaints or requests for additional service.

The Division of Highways & Maintenance has established a dedicated phone line to respond to complaints. Calls for service should be avoided early in a storm since it may take several hours for plows to make their way to your street. If there is an immediate emergency or you feel that we may have missed your street, please call our snow complaint telephone number at **508-430-7555**.

How you can help

If you mark the front of your property with reflectors, please be sure to place them at least one foot back from the pavement. This will enable us to clear to the edge of the road without damaging your lawn.

It is essential that cars be parked well off the roadways so that the plows can open the roads as much as possible.

Reduced visibility during a snowstorm sometimes makes it impossible to see mailboxes in time to avoid hitting them. Most often, it is the heavy, wet snow rolling off the plow that damages mailboxes. This cannot be avoided. Any installation within the road layout is placed at the owner's risk. We encourage residents to set their mailbox posts at the maximum usable distance from the road edge (two foot minimum is recommended).

During the storm:

Please drive slowly. Excessive speed is the number one cause of winter accidents. On many occasions, people have tried to pass a plow or sander. Inexperienced motorists often do not realize that four-wheel drive does not make a vehicle stop faster. This can create a dangerous situation for themselves, as well as other drivers. Please give snow removal vehicles the right of way, and stay at least 100 feet back from sanders. Not only will this give you a safer surface to drive on, it will also prevent your vehicle from being sandblasted. Please do not drive in winter storms unless it is absolutely necessary.

After the storm:

Before your final driveway cleanup, please check the street. If it is clean and opened up to its full width, then you are safe. If not, be assured that the plow truck will be back to fill in your driveway. This is not intentional. Like water, moving snow will follow the path of least resistance which, unfortunately, will be your freshly shoveled driveway. Please understand that neither the Town, nor its hired contractors, can come back to shovel or plow out your driveway.

If there is a catch basin in front of your house, you can help by making sure it is clear of snow and debris, which may prevent the road from draining properly.

Finally, please be patient. Snow removal is a very arduous and time-consuming task. Your DPW workers and hired snowplow contractors do not get a shift change. They work around the clock until the job is done. We strive for the safest roadways at a reasonable cost, and in the shortest period of time. The cooperation and support of Harwich residents and businesses is greatly appreciated.

Attachment A

Hired Equipment Snow Removal Policy

Updated 11/23/2004

The following must be strictly adhered to:

1. Calling In:

If you are called in to sand or plow, you are expected to arrive within one (1) hour, **equipped and ready to plow**. In the event you cannot respond or need more time to get ready, you must call the Highway Department at (508) 430-7555.

2. Address and Telephone:

Please be sure that the office has your correct and current address, telephone number, and cell phone number.

3. Check in for work:

You are expected to arrive ready to work, with sander operational and plow attached if plowing. **Do not punch your time card until you are ready to work**. When you are ready to work you must sign in at the dispatch counter, get your time card, and punch in. It is essential that you sign the payroll form. Failure to do so may result in a delay in payment. You will be given your route slip or any changes to it at this time.

4. Private Work:

Private jobs **will not** be allowed on the Highway Department's time.

5. Alcohol and/or Drug Use: Zero Tolerance:

The use of either alcohol or illegal drugs will not be tolerated. Anyone found to be under the influence of either alcohol or drugs will be terminated. Anyone suspected to be operating under the influence of drugs or alcohol will be reported to the proper authorities.

6. Accidents:

All accidents, whether involving vehicles, people, or property, are to be reported to the office immediately.

7. Confrontations:

If you are confronted by a citizen for any reason involving your operation, please refer them to the office at 508-430-7555. Please do not speak for, or on the Town's behalf.

8. Breakdowns:

All breakdowns are to be reported to the office as soon as possible. If you expect to be out of service for more than 30 minutes you must notify the office so we can cover your route. If you are out of service for more than 1 hour you must punch out. If you are unable to return to the Highway Barn, you must notify the office to punch you out.

9. Route Checks:

The Highway Foreman will periodically check all routes to ensure that you are progressing as expected and that you are not in need of anything. Absence from your assigned route without permission will not be tolerated and will serve as grounds for termination. If for any reason you must leave your route, call the office first.

10. Communications:

You are required to carry a cellular phone at all times. Please be sure to report any telephone number changes to the office.