



TOWN OF ST. JOHNSBURY

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Select Board
FROM: Chad Whitehead, Town Manager
CC: Hugh Wescott, DPW, Chief of Police, PD
Date: September 24, 2018
RE: Snow and Ice Policy

1. INTRODUCTION

The responsibility for providing snow and ice control on St. Johnsbury streets, selected critical municipal facilities and municipal parking lots rests with the Department of Public Works (DPW). The Department is also responsible for winter maintenance of U.S. Routes 2 and 5 within the Village limits.

Because snow and ice control operations are an emergency in nature, widely scattered and of large scale, advanced planning and organization for removal of snow and ice is critical. Consequently all planning and equipment preparation is completed prior to the arrival of the snow season. Rate and accumulation of snowfall, moisture content, temperature, time of day, visibility, wind velocity, duration and traffic volume are factors that interact to create a unique aspect for each storm with the result that no two storms are ever identical. Therefore, while this plan provides a solid basis for action, common sense must be used in making decisions on what must be done during and after snow and ice events.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this plan is to inform all DPW employees and the general public of the procedures that generally will be followed for snow and ice control in St. Johnsbury.

3. GOAL

During and after each snow or ice event it is the goal of Department of Public Works to maintain reasonably safe travel conditions for prudent drivers on all streets.

During heavy or prolonged snow or severe ice conditions this may not be possible. In those cases DPW will prioritize its efforts in accordance with the following major goals:

- Goal 1: Maintain access to, and service from, critical public safety facilities (e.g. Hospital, Ambulance Service, Police Station and Fire Station); provide for through traffic on U.S. Routes 2 and 5 and keep major hills passable at all times.

- Goal 2: Maintain, or restore as necessary, cleared routes of collector streets throughout the Town to provide for a network of travel within a reasonable distance of every citizen with special emphasis on access to schools and downtown.
- Goal 3: Clear all streets in a timely manner after precipitation has stopped.

4. RESOURCES

WEATHER FORECASTING

The Department of Public Works uses weather forecast information available from the internet. These forecasts, together with the U.S. Weather Bureau reports, have greatly assisted in increasing the effectiveness of the snow and ice control program. The Department will continue to rely upon these services plus actual field conditions in the immediate area to determine when to mobilize and what equipment and materials to utilize.

SNOW ROUTE AREA MAPS

The Director of Public Works shall maintain, in his office, the map showing the Priority 1 and Priority 2 streets. Copies of the map are distributed to snow and ice control crews and are included as Appendix A.

EQUIPMENT

The current snow removal fleet consists of (3) 10 Wheeled plow trucks, (4) 6 Wheel plow trucks, (1) low pros, two (2) 1.5 Ton 4x4 plow truck and, one (1) sidewalk snow plow, and two ³/₄ ton pick-ups each with a plow to use as needed. Each plow vehicle has a salt/sand spreader. There is one (1) front end loader that is used to load salt on the vehicles and one front end loader to plow parking lots. Snow pick up is done by the loader and snow blower with assistance, as required, from the sidewalk plow, grader and the Work Crew where needed..

The size of the fleet is adequate to handle the majority of snow and ice storms reasonably expected in an average snow season. However, it is impractical to assume that all equipment will be operating and provisions must be made for equipment down- time. When equipment is disabled, every attempt is made to get the equipment repaired and operational as soon possible.

DPW trucks are utilized for snow hauling operations with assistance from hired trucks as required. The DPW is responsible for truck loading equipment (e.g. loader, backhoe or snow blower) and snow dumping sites.

PERSONNEL

The removal of snow and ice from public streets is considered an emergency operation that takes precedence over other tasks of the Department of Public Works except critical services (e.g. water and wastewater treatment) and other emergency situations.

Within the Department, the Water Treatment Division and Wastewater Treatment Division (Utility Partners) also perform snow removal operations at their respective facilities (Water Treatment Plant, Wastewater Plant, Remote Pumping Stations, etc.) The Schools Department takes care of their own facilities.

MATERIALS

DPW uses salt as a deicer. In unusual circumstances, paved streets may be spot sanded to provide skid resistance and traction on hills, controlled intersections, bridges and curves. All back roads, (dirt) receive sand only.

5. ACTION PLAN

The following general guidelines have been established for snow and ice control operation in St Johnsbury. These practices are of general nature only and will depend to a great degree on storm specific factors, i.e. wind, temperature, moisture content etc.

The Town has been divided into ten (10) major snow and ice removal areas, with a driver assigned to each of these areas.

ALERT AND CALL OUT

During Normal Working Hours: The WMO is responsible for monitoring street and weather conditions and initiation of snow and ice control procedures. After Normal Working Hours, Weekends & Holidays: As the department is on call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, the Police Department will notify the DPW Winter Maintenance Officer about hazardous street conditions outside the normal Street Department hours of 7:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Monday-Friday. The Assistant Public Works Director acts as Winter Maintenance Officer (WMO). During the winter months there is also an 11:00PM to 7:00AM watching over the main routes and hills for emergency purposes.

When the Police Department becomes aware of snow or ice accumulation that is an unacceptable hazard to normal winter driving they will notify the DPW. If the Police Department is going to error, they will error on the side of increased safety for our citizens. Once aware of the street conditions and weather forecast, the WMO shall control the amount of equipment placed into service and the number of employees assigned to this activity.

SALTING

DPW salt trucks are sent out under the same priority criteria as plowing procedures. Hilly areas are often given higher priority than flatter areas.

Snowfall accumulations of up to two (2) inches, more or less, are generally handled (depending on weather conditions) by salting. During light snowfall, equipment is sent out to spot salt icy areas, steep grades and intersections.

DPW considers cost, environmental impact of salt usage as well as safety of the public when establishing application rates and locations for application. It is recognized that a "Bare Pavement" policy is not possible at all times during winter periods in the northern regions of the country.

The following procedures shall be followed in an effort to maintain safe road conditions, establish uniformity, conserve deicing materials, and minimize environmental impacts:

- Spreaders shall be controlled to conform to application rates recommended by The Salt Institute and Cargill's Sensible Salting Guide with consideration given to past experience and weather forecasting for the following 24 hours.
- To achieve desired placement of salt on the road surface, ground speed should not exceed 20 miles per hour. Conditions may require a slower ground speed.

- Salt should be placed on the crown of road on residential streets, allowing traffic to carry it to curbside.
- During plowing operations salt should generally not be applied to residential streets until the final pass with the exception of intersections, hills, curves, and school zones.
- Hills and sharp curves will require more salt than flatter areas.
- Salt application rates increase as temperatures drop. However, in extreme cold salt does very little good, so salting will be reduced during these times.
- During periods of extreme cold, salt may be mixed with sand. When sand and salt are mixed, ratios vary according to the temperature.

SANDING

Due to concerns of grit accumulation in the combined sewers, wear on sewage pumping facilities and residual sand and dust in the urban area, the DPW does not use sand except under extreme cold circumstances when salt is ineffective.

PLOWING

Snowplowing operations generally do not begin unless snowfall accumulations measure more than two inches (2") and snow is falling and/or weather forecasts call for additional accumulation. Salting and snowplowing operations may be conducted concurrently.

The snow plowing will begin when the snow depth reaches 2" in the streets and the forecast predicts continuing snowfall. During a storm event, it may be necessary to remove slush during periods of rapid melting.

Plowing will be done with a primary goal of opening streets for traffic flow, and a secondary goal of improving street parking conditions in the Central Business District. Snow plowing will be accomplished by the DPW using truck plows.

SNOW PICK UP AND HAULING

The DPW routinely picks up and removes snow from the following streets: Downtown Business District and all streets with metered parking.

In the downtown area on the second night, following the clean up of last storm, the snow is windrowed then blown onto trucks and taken to the snow dump site. Traffic and parking may be restricted during pick up if conditions warrant.

The WMO shall be responsible for contacting the Police Department in order to coordinate snow removal and hauling operations with law enforcement's tagging and towing duties.

6. SNOW & ICE CONTROL PRIORITIES

Streets Priorities:

Under favorable conditions, DPW will be able to provide adequate service to all sections of the City. In more trying circumstances, the following order of priority will prevail:

- Priority 1: Routes 2 & 5, access to NVRH (Hospital) and public safety facilities, and major hills.
- Priority 2: Collector Streets, all school routes, parking lots, all residential streets and business district.

Priority 3:

The streets afforded Priority 2 are all Class 2 and class 3 Highways as noted on the Official Highway Map of St Johnsbury along with parking lots and sidewalks and other streets selected to provide a network of travel accessible to most residents within a reasonable distance from their homes or businesses. Citizens should be aware of these streets and use them when travel is absolutely necessary during or immediately after storm events.

Priority 4: Parking Lots

The Department plows and salts various town owned public parking lots and the parking lots for the Police Department, Fire Department and Town Office. (Welcome Center)
Public parking lots are plowed according to the discretion of the WMO and may be done prior to completing all residential streets.

Priority 5: Sidewalks

As resources and time allow, DPW will plow and salt selected public sidewalks outside of the Downtown Business District. The selection of these sidewalks is based upon such factors as pedestrian use, proximity to schools and the downtown area. Short, isolated sections of sidewalk will not be cleared by DPW.

Priority 6: Snow Pick up/Snow Hauling

Accumulated snow is routinely picked up and removed from certain areas where it would interfere with commercial parking, traffic on narrow streets or children pick up at schools. Snow pick up should be done within two days of a large snow accumulation and before the next snow event.

- Downtown snow removal times are generally 12:00 a.m. to 7:00 am

7. GENERAL SNOW AND ICE CONTROL PROCEDURES

The Winter Maintenance Officer (WMO) determines the number of personnel needed for each particular call-out storm emergency.

The WMO is responsible for providing snow and ice control maps and/or written route descriptions to equipment operators. Drivers are expected to keep this information available in the vehicle and to request additional copies of this information if it has been lost or damaged.

Personnel who are operating vehicles and equipment that are involved in an accident are required to report the accident to their supervisor at once. In addition, all drivers are expected to contact the St Johnsbury Police Department. Drivers must also complete and submit an accident report to their immediate supervisor no later than the end of their shift.

Assistance in moving vehicles from snow routes and the central business district as well as side streets can be obtained from the Police Department.

8. PUBLIC RELATIONS

Managing Complaints and Requests for Service:

During snow and ice control operations, numerous inquiries, complaints and requests for service are received by the Department of Public Works staff. The Public Works will take measures to keep

Town Manager and staff informed as well as the Town Clerk regarding snow and ice removal operations (e.g., schedules and breakdowns).

The Town Manager and staff as well as Town Clerk and Staff shall forward any questions and concerns from citizens to DPW Director, WMO or Forman. If the caller requires action which the Town Manager and his staff as well as Town Clerk and her Staff are unable to perform, The Town Manager and his staff as well as Town Clerk and her Staff shall notify appropriate personnel of inquiries, complaints and requests for service based on the following to the DPW Director, WMO, or Forman.

- Safety issues affecting the public or DPW staff shall be forwarded immediately by radio or telephone, or hand delivered to appropriate personnel.
- Non-safety related issues shall be forwarded to the appropriate personnel in a timely manner.
- Property damage (e.g., mailboxes and lawns) shall be recorded and turned over to the WMO through normal channels.

9. RESPONSIBILITIES OF CITIZENS

Citizens can make winter travel in St Johnsbury safer by observing these safety tips:

- Travel at a safe distance from salt trucks and snowplows at all times to avoid damage to your vehicle. Do not try to pass these vehicles when plowing or when spreaders are operating.
- Exercise extreme care and caution when driving in adverse and inclement weather.
- Be particularly alert for pedestrians.
- Limit and restrict travel unless absolutely necessary during severe weather. Winter snow and ice tires are required for safe winter travel in Vermont. Most class 3 dirt roads and several steep paved roads within the town limits also require 4-wheel drive for safe travel. Consider using The Bus during inclement weather.
- Park off-street. By Town Ordinance, "No parking is allowed on any Town street from midnight to 6:00 a.m. from November 15 through April 15.
- Do not push snow onto the roadway as this creates a hazardous situation for other motorists.
- Eliminate snow piles at your driveway entrance whenever possible. High accumulation of snow will obstruct your vision when exiting your driveway and prevents oncoming motorists from seeing you.
- Be patient, snow removal takes time.
- Clean snow from fire hydrants and do not block the hydrants when moving snow.
- Owners of private parking lots are responsible for removing their own snow.
- Keep piled snow away from mailboxes so mail can be delivered

10. GENERAL POLICIES

Late Spring and Early Fall Snowfalls - Snow may be left on the roadways if melting is determined imminent.

Private Streets & Driveways - DPW will not plow or salt private streets, driveways, or walkways.

Recreational Trails - DPW does not perform winter maintenance on recreational trails.

Property Damage - It is recognized that on occasion private property is damaged during snow and ice control operations. Where this happens, the DPW will handle damages in the following manner:

1. Mailboxes - Residents are allowed a mail/media box near the roadway. Those boxes should be of sufficient strength to withstand normal maintenance operations.

Where damage to the mailbox occurs the Projects Manger shall investigate such damage. If it is determined that the weight of the snow caused the damage, DPW will not assume responsibility for repair of the mailbox. Where evidence indicates that physical contact between the plow and the mailbox occurred, DPW will have the mailbox temporarily repaired within 48 hours of receiving notification of such damage. If the mailbox and post cannot be temporarily repaired, a portable mailbox will be set in place so mail service may be continued. DPW will replace the damaged mailbox structure the following spring with a standard No. 1 black, white, or silver mailbox mounted on a 4" x 4" treated post.

2. Newspaper Boxes - DPW does not take responsibility for damage to media or paper boxes and does not repair or replace them.

3. Lawn - DPW will repair any significant physical damage to lawns caused by DPW snow removal operations. The DPW does not repair/replace vegetation damaged due to the application of sand, salt, or other deicing chemicals.

4. Landscaping - DPW assumes no responsibility for damage to landscaping (including trees, shrubs and other plantings and inanimate materials) that is installed or encroaching on Town owned properties or Rights of Way.

5. Other Fixtures - DPW assumes no responsibility for damage to underground lawn sprinkling systems, exterior lighting systems, underground fencing, and similar materials installed in the Town owned properties or Rights of Way.

11. DEPARTURE FROM PLAN

The Department recognizes that conditions may be so unusual or unexpected that a departure from these general policies may be required. The aforementioned policies are guidelines with a certain degree of discretionary power relegated to the WMO. It is also understood that 100% of the street system will not receive primary treatment at each storm occurrence; a true "Bare Pavement" policy is cost prohibitive.

12. ANNUAL REVIEW

Each year before snow removal season a meeting will be held with the Town manager, Public Works Director and Chief of Police to review this policy