

City of Fertile, Minnesota

Snowplowing Policy

1. Introduction

The City of Fertile finds that it is in the best interest of the residents of the city to assume basic responsibility for control of snow and ice on city streets. Reasonable ice and snow control is necessary for routine travel and emergency services. The city will attempt to provide such control in a safe and cost effective manner, keeping in mind safety, budget, personnel, and environmental concerns. The city will use city employees, equipment and/or private contractors to provide this service. This policy does not relieve the operator of private vehicles, pedestrians, property owners, residents and all others that may be using public streets, of their responsibility to act in a reasonable, prudent and cautious manner, given the prevailing street conditions.

2. When Will the City Start Snow or Ice Control Operations?

The Maintenance Supervisor will decide when to begin snow or ice control operations. The criteria for that decision are:

- A. Snow accumulation of three (3) inches or more within a 72 hour period;
- B. Drifting of snow that causes problems for travel;
- C. Icy conditions which seriously affect travel; and
- D. Time of snowfall in relationship to heavy use of streets.

Snow and ice control operations are expensive and involve the use of limited personnel and equipment. Consequently, snowplowing operations will not generally be conducted for snowfall of less than three (3) inches.

3. How Snow will be Plowed

Snow will be plowed in a manner so as to minimize traffic obstructions. The center of the roadway will be plowed first. The snow shall then be pushed from left to right clearing the street from curb to curb. The discharge shall go onto the boulevard area of the street. Depending on snowfall conditions and duration of the storm, cleanup operations can widely fluctuate. In times of extreme snowfall, streets will not always immediately be able to be completely cleared of snow.

4. Snow Removal

The Maintenance Supervisor will determine if and when snow will be removed from the area by truck. Such snow removal will occur in areas where there is no room on the boulevard for snow storage and in areas where accumulated piles of snow create a hazardous condition. Snow removal operations will not commence until other snowplowing operations have been completed. Snow removal operations may also be delayed depending on weather conditions, personnel and budget availability. The City will do their best to remove all snow piles within two weeks of a large snow event. The snow will be removed and hauled to a snow storage area. The snow storage area will be located so as to minimize environmental problems. It is not the responsibility of the City to maintain State or County Highways but will assist them in their snow removal program.

5. Priorities and Schedule of Streets to be Plowed

The maintenance department has classified city streets based on the street function, traffic volume and importance to the welfare of the community. Those streets classified as "Snow Plow Routes" will be plowed first. These are high volume routes, which connect major sections of the city and provide access for emergency fire, police, and medical services.

The second priority streets are those streets providing access to schools and commercial businesses. The third priority streets are low volume residential streets. The fourth priority areas are alleys and city parking lots.

During significant and severe storms, the city must be prepared to move personnel and equipment to maintain priority routes first. In fulfilling the need to have all priority streets safe and passable, when resources are limited, plowing of all other streets may be stopped at any time so resources can be shifted to priority routes.

Unforeseeable circumstances may cause delays in completing assigned plow routes. Such circumstances may include weather conditions that endanger the safety of snowplow operators and/or safe and effective operation of equipment, commuter traffic, disabled vehicles, poor visibility conditions, parked cars along streets, assistance to emergency response vehicles, equipment breakdown, and personnel shortages.

6. Work Schedule for Snowplow Operators

Snowplow operators will be expected to work their eight hour shifts. In severe snow emergencies, operators sometimes have to work in excess of eight hour shifts. However, because of budget and safety concerns, no operator shall work more than a twelve-hour shift in any twenty-four hour period. Operators will take a fifteen-minute break every two hours with a half-hour lunch break after four hours. After a twelve-hour shift, the operators will be replaced if additional qualified personnel are available.

After a snowfall of four inches or more, personnel will report for snow removal duty at 4 a.m. if conditions allow.

7. Traffic Regulations

The city recognizes that snowplow operators are exempt from traffic regulations set forth in Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 169 while actually engaged in work on streets, except for regulations related to driving while impaired and the safety of school children. Pursuant to this authority, snowplow operators engaged in snow removal or ice control on city streets have discretion to disregard traffic laws set forth in Chapter 169, except for laws relating to impaired driving and school children safety, when in their judgment, it is safe to disregard such laws. The privileges granted herein to operators of snow removal and ice control vehicles shall apply only if the vehicle is equipped with one lighted lamp displaying a flashing, oscillating, or rotating amber light placed in such a position on the vehicle as to be visible throughout an arc of 360 degrees.

8. Weather Conditions

Snow and ice control operations will be conducted only when weather conditions do not endanger the safety of snowplow operators and equipment. Factors that may delay snow and ice control operations include: severe cold, significant winds, and limited visibility.

9. Use of Sand, Salt, and Other Chemicals

The city will use sand, salt, and other chemicals when there are hazardous ice or slippery conditions. The city is concerned about the effect of such chemicals on the environment and will limit its use for that reason. The road to the Learning Center will be plowed the same day as other City streets if time allows and salt will be applied regularly as needed due to the chronic icy condition of the west facing slope on that road.

10. **Sidewalks**

Maintenance personnel will maintain the community center sidewalks. As there are a limited number of personnel available, the city will clean those sidewalks as soon as possible by 8 a.m. The rink building will be cleared by 2 p.m. and the Learning Center by 4 p.m. if all other clearing is finished.

11. **Driveway ends**

One of the most frequent and irritable problems in removal of snow from public streets is the snow deposited in driveways during plowing operations. Snow being accumulated on the plow blade has no place to go but in the driveway. The plow drivers make every attempt to minimize the amount of snow deposited in driveways but the amount can still be significant. It is not the City's responsibility to clean the ends of driveways but this will be provided as a service to residents.

12. **Mailboxes**

Damage to a mailbox is a risk that snowplow operators face during their winter plowing requirements. The city will conduct a review of each mailbox damage claim to determine whether the city has any legal responsibility for the damage and, if so, to replace or provide reimbursement for the mailbox. If the city, in its discretion, determines that reimbursement or replacement is appropriate, the city may:

- 1) At the mailbox owner's request, replace the mailbox with a standard size, non-decorative metal mailbox and replace the support post as necessary with a 4" x 4", decay resistance wood support post, both which will be installed by the city;
- 2) Provide reimbursement in a reasonable amount for the mailbox and support posts that meet the city's ordinance standards, as well as state and federal requirements for mailbox size, support and placement.

13. **Street Parking**

No vehicle shall be parked or allowed to stand for more than 24 hours on any of the public streets or alleys in the City. The City can at any time upon notice require vehicles to be moved in the event of snow removal. The City may also designate an area as no parking at any time for the purpose of snow removal. Where parking has been restricted for snow removal purposes, parking may be resumed on individual streets as soon as snow has been removed and where parking will not interfere with remaining snow removal work.

14. **Complaint Procedure**

Complaints regarding snow and ice control or damage shall be taken during normal working hours and handled in accordance with the City's complaint procedures. Complaints involving access to property or problems requiring immediate attention shall be handled on a priority basis. Response time should not exceed 24 hours for any complaint. It should be understood that all complaint responses are to ensure that the provisions of this policy have been fulfilled and that all residents of the City have been treated uniformly.

Complaints will be recorded on telephone logs. Calls requiring service will be transferred to a work request and forwarded to the appropriate supervisor for scheduling. Emergency complaints will be handled in an expeditious manner as resources are available.

15. **Review and Modification of Policy**

The Public Works Director and City Administrator shall keep on file all comments and complaints received regarding this policy. The policy will be reviewed periodically. Any review will consider comments and complaints since the last review and any other factors affecting the policy or its implementation.