

# YATES COUNTY HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT

## SNOW & ICE CONTROL POLICY

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#### 1. INTRODUCTION

This policy is intended to provide the motoring public and emergency service agencies and personnel with general information regarding snow and ice removal operations, level of service, how the public can help and to serve as a guideline and training tool for Highway Department employees.

The Yates County Highway Department is responsible for the maintenance and repair of 181.31 centerline miles of County roads and 40 bridges throughout the County. The Highway Department has no greater challenge than during the winter snow and ice season when it is charged with attempting to provide passable roads for routine travel and emergency services during and after a snow or ice event. During the winter season, Yates County Highway Department personnel typically perform snow and ice control activities on about 83 of the approximately 181 miles and contracts with seven of the nine Town Highway Departments for the other 98 miles. Benton and Jerusalem do not contract with the County for snow and ice control activities.

#### 2. SNOW AND ICE CONTROL GOALS

- Maintain County roads in a passable driving condition for the motoring public in a safe, cost effective manner with motorist safety, budget constraints and Highway Department personnel safety in mind.
- Continually monitor weather and road conditions to enable the Highway Department to determine an effective response to an approaching winter storm event or a storm that has arrived.
- Monitor ongoing and past snow and ice control operations, strategies and costs.
- Educate the public with regard to what levels of service can be expected during and after a storm and how the public can help the Highway Department best perform its snow and ice removal duties.

### **3. LEVEL OF SERVICE**

It is not the policy of the Yates County Highway Department to provide continually bare roads or to provide snow and ice control services 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. It is also not possible to maintain a bare road surface during or immediately following a snow or ice event. Typical hours of operation for snow and ice control are from the hours of 4:30 AM to approximately 9:00 PM. Snow and ice control operations will be primarily focused on morning and evening commuter travel times.

During times of severe blizzard, drifting and/or icing conditions, the Highway Superintendent or Deputy Superintendent may opt to keep 1 or 2 trucks on duty after normal hours if it is anticipated that without this extended operation it will be extremely difficult to open or clear certain roads for commuters.

Sections of roadways improved for winter travel may continue to have residual snow and ice in a compacted condition upon them until warmer temperatures or de-icing materials are applied to allow for complete melt-off after a storm. These conditions may be continuous or they may be localized in certain areas of the road depending on temperature, wind velocity, direction and other factors.

### **4. SNOW-WATCH**

Yates County Highway Department assigns “Snow-Watch” duty to two foremen each week who then take turns for 12 hours at a time each day for 1 week at a time then two different foremen are assigned as Snow-Watch for the next week. The “Snow-Watch” is responsible for monitoring weather and road conditions and for initiating and coordinating snow and ice control operations on County roads. Snow-Watch also communicates and coordinates with other Town Highway Departments in the County, The Yates County Office of Sheriff, the NY State Department of Transportation and various school transportation directors and/or administrators regarding current conditions and ongoing snow and ice control operations.

### **5. EQUIPMENT**

The Yates County Highway Department will acquire, maintain and repair and replace equipment as the annual County Road Machinery budget (as adopted by the YC Legislature) allows. To provide for utilization of equipment in a cost-effective manner, the County may use trucks with plows and sanders, motor graders, front-end loaders or snow blowers as necessary for the control of snow and ice on its roads.

The Department also uses a computer monitor and weather information service provided by DTN and all plow trucks including the 1-ton Snow-Watch patrol truck are equipped with air and pavement temperature sensing equipment to assist in determining the best course of action for current or anticipated conditions. The Department uses sander controls that are calibrated and tested prior to each snow season. Annual calibration and maintenance of the sander controls is essential to overall cost effective snow and ice control operations. The type of controllers used by Yates County are “ground-speed” controllers that apply sand and salt at a rate relative to the travel speed of the truck. This reduces excessive application of materials during slow travel speeds. Plow truck operators have the capability to increase the pre-set sander application rate for curves and intersections if needed from inside their trucks.

## **6. DISPATCH OF EQUIPMENT**

The start of snow and ice control operations for any snow or ice event is dependent on the immediate and anticipated weather conditions. Upon visual inspection of the existing conditions on various roads and monitoring weather predictions of anticipated conditions, Snow-watch will initiate snow and ice control operations by calling in the necessary personnel and dispatching of equipment as required. The response time will be as soon as possible depending on how fast the existing road conditions allow personnel to report to work. The Superintendent or his designee(s) has the authority to dispatch County equipment to any operator's residence to provide transportation to the operator.

For emergency vehicles responding to emergency situations, necessary equipment and personnel will be dispatched as soon as possible. The request for assistance must be received directly from the Yates County Office of Sheriff or a Fire Department officer at the scene.

## **7. MATERIALS AND PLOWING PROCEDURES**

Yates County Highway Department currently uses straight rock salt on the 83 miles they plow out of the total 181 miles of County roads. During exceptionally cold periods, a mixture of 50% sand and 50% salt may be used or straight salt treated with liquid de-icing materials that lower the working temperature of the salt. Sand alone does not have ice-melting capabilities but does provide some limited traction for a very short period of time until traffic displaces the sand off the roadway. The mechanical action of tires running over the salt combined with the moisture in the air and snow provides ice-melting capabilities by creating a brine solution that has a lower freezing temperature than the temperature of the surrounding ice. Salt has a practical working temperature range down to approximately 15 degrees Fahrenheit (road surface temperature). Limited or no salting is done during periods of heavy snowfall or during blowing and drifting conditions because falling or blowing and drifting snow covers the material and the salt gets scraped off on subsequent plowing passes. Plowing typically ends when the storm ends and roads have been made passable for travel. Drift plowing and pushing back accumulated snow along the roadside will continue after the storm as necessary.

## **8. MAILBOXES AND MAIL DELIVERY**

It shall be the policy of the Highway Department to repair or replace only those mailboxes that have been damaged due to direct contact with the plow or wing. Mailboxes are sometimes inadvertently knocked down by the heavy windrow of snow being carried by the plow blade and deposited along the roadside as the truck moves forward. The sheer weight and force of the snow is sufficient to cause many mailboxes to become dislodged from the post and may cause posts to be tipped over, bent, or broken off.

Prior to each snow season, the plow operators and wingmen will drive their assigned routes and make note of those mailboxes that may be a hazard or are already in a state of disrepair, damaged, bent over, etc. for future reference and consideration should a complaint be lodged with the Highway Department during the snow season. All mailboxes that are in extremely poor condition will be photographed for future reference.

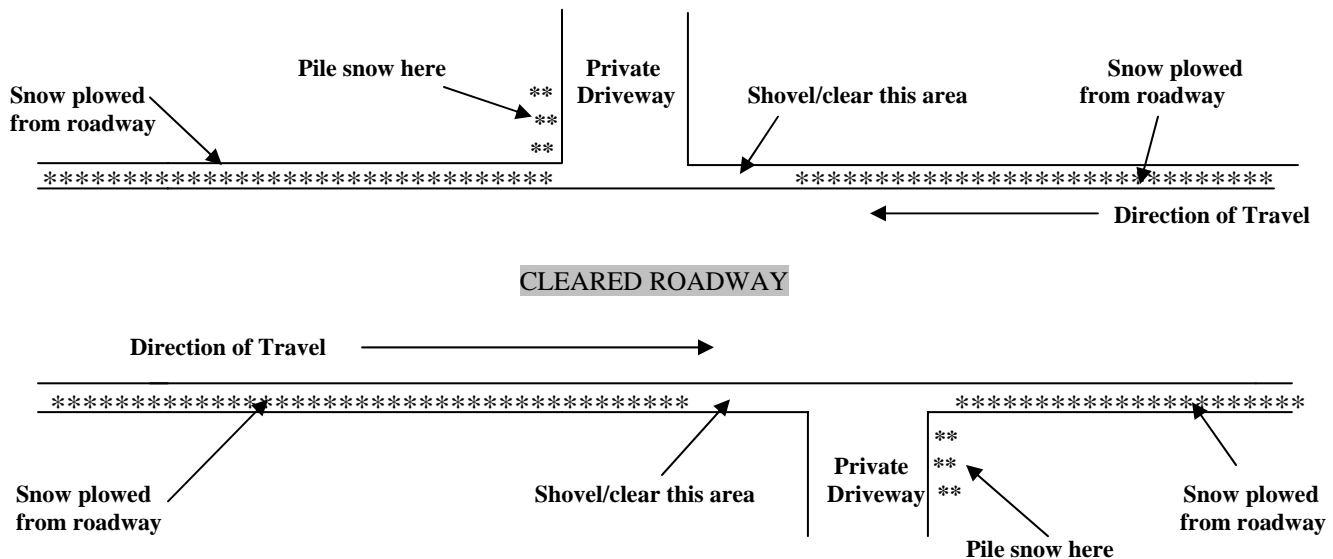
If a mailbox and/or post are damaged beyond repair during snow removal operations due to direct contact with the plow or wing, a temporary mailbox will be provided until such time that a permanent replacement can be installed (usually in the spring).

The Highway Department will replace mailboxes damaged by direct contact with the plow or wing with a generic “swing-away” type that consists of a standard size, metal mailbox attached to a “swing-away” arm that is mounted on a 4” x 4” post. Mailboxes that require replacement will be replaced up to a maximum cost of \$25.00. If a decorator type mailbox and/or post is damaged and requires replacement, the Highway Department will reimburse the resident for up to a maximum of \$25.00 for the cost of materials and it shall be the responsibility of the resident to purchase and install the decorator mailbox and post.

Every effort is made by plow operators to remove snow as close to mailboxes as possible to provide access by US Postal Service delivery vehicles. However, it is the responsibility of the resident to provide final cleaning and access adjacent to their mailboxes.

## 9. DRIVEWAYS

During snow removal operations the accumulated windrow of snow being pushed and carried by the plow inevitably gets deposited to the trucks’ right side shoulder and/or ditch along its route. Driveways along the route will, inevitably, also get filled in. The Highway Department assumes no responsibility for the removal of snow deposited in driveways as a result of normal snow removal operations. The Highway Department can not provide exact times that a certain road will be plowed and it is not possible to change the angle of the blade to avoid depositing snow into private driveways. The recommended way to minimize the amount of snow that gets plowed into a private driveway is shown in the sketch below.



## 10. DEPOSITING SNOW ON A HIGHWAY

It is illegal to plow, place, push, throw or otherwise deposit or cause to be deposited, any snow or destructive or injurious material or any material which interferes with the safe use of the highway per section 1219 of the New York State Vehicle & Traffic Law.

## **11. LANDSCAPING AND LAWN DAMAGE**

Landscaping and lawns, including but not limited to; shrubs, trees, inanimate objects, etc. installed by a property owner within the ROW will be the responsibility of the owner and the owner assumes all risk of damage to such items. Furthermore, the County cannot reasonably control drift or discharge of snow and/or shoulder materials from the snowplow into roadside ditches and lawns. Unless there is lawn or landscaping damage off the ROW due to direct contact with the plow or wing, the County will not be responsible for the removal/repair of any gravel, stone or other aggregate shoulder materials inadvertently cast into adjacent lawn areas by the plow or wing.

## **12. SERVICE REQUESTS, INQUIRIES AND COMPLAINTS**

All requests, inquiries or complaints about snow and ice control service/operations should be directed to the Yates County Highway Department office at (315) 531-3200. Normal office hours during the winter snow and ice season are 7:00 AM - 3:30 PM, Monday through Friday. The on-duty Snow-Watch or other Highway Department personnel will respond as soon as feasibly possible.

During any given severe snow or ice event, the Highway Department is extremely busy and committed to clearing the roads as quickly as possible and to the best of their ability for the traveling public. It should be noted that at the start of or during a snow or ice event, Snow-Watch and plow operators will either be enroute or already on duty. During the typical snow and ice control hours of 4:30 AM to 9:00 PM, if it is snowing heavily and/or the roads are icing over, the Department is well aware of that fact and is out doing all they can at that particular time. The Highway Department recommends patience and due caution if travel is required.

## **13. EXCEPTIONS**

Each snow or ice event has individual characteristics such as rate of accumulation, temperature, wind velocity and direction, visibility, time of day, etc. associated with it and therefore must be dealt with accordingly. The County Superintendent of Highways and/or his designee(s) reserve the right to alter operational strategies, deviate from these standards or terminate ongoing snow and ice control operations at any time, if it is determined that various factors including but not limited to, the need to rest snowplow crews, equipment failure, extreme snowfall accumulation and conditions which make snow and ice control operations unsafe, unnecessary or ineffective.

## **14. HOW THE PUBLIC CAN HELP**

There are several things that motorists and the public can do to help the Highway Department best perform their snow and ice control duties.

- Be patient and be assured that during a snow or ice event every reasonable effort will be made to keep the roads open.
- Allow extra time for travelling to and from destinations
- Be considerate of the snowplow operators.
- Do not attempt to stop a snowplow or obstruct its path. Plow trucks, when loaded with sand and salt weigh approximately 31 tons. That is a lot of weight and responsibility for the driver to deal with and the trucks simply are not as maneuverable and agile as a passenger vehicle. They require extra time and distance to stop or avoid trouble.

- When approaching snow removal equipment from the rear, travel a minimum of 200 feet behind the equipment allowing for sanding and abrupt movements.
- Use extreme caution when passing snow removal equipment. Before you pass please flash your headlights and/or honk your horn to alert the operator of your intentions.
- Do not park along the roadway during a snow or ice event. Parked vehicles are a hazard not only to the snowplow operators but the travelling public as well. Any cars parked along the roadway and are interfering with snow removal operations will be called in to the Yates County Office of Sheriff for removal at the owner's expense.
- When clearing driveways put the snow on the "down" side relative to the direction of travel by the snowplow so when the plow blade does deposit its windrow of snow back into the driveway there will be less snow for the homeowner to remove. (see sketch above in section #9)
- During times of severe storms or blizzard conditions tune to WFLR (96.9 FM, 1570 AM ) or WYLF (850 AM) for information on travel advisories or road closings.

## **15. WINTER DRIVING TIPS**

Winter driving can be very dangerous and requires motorists to be fully alert and aware of their surrounding conditions. There are some things that can be done by motorists to improve their chances for a safe driving experience. Some of the following tips can help.

- Don't drive unless you have to.
- If you must drive, drive defensively, wear your seatbelt, turn your headlights on if conditions warrant their use, be alert and exercise extreme caution. Driving on snow and ice packed roads requires your full attention and demands your best driving skills.
- Be informed of the current and predicted weather conditions for your area and know your employers' inclement weather policy. The fewer cars on the road, the more effective the plowing operations.
- Prepare your vehicle in advance of inclement weather. Regularly check the battery, antifreeze, windshield wipers, heater and defroster. Have at least a half a tank of fuel and have adequate snow tires or chains on your vehicle.
- Clean all snow and ice from your vehicle including all glass areas, headlights and taillights before driving.
- Carry some basic equipment and extra clothing in your vehicle in case of an accident, long delay or mechanical problems. Some useful items to have are a flashlight, jumper cables, first aid kit, a hat, gloves, boots, blanket, ice scraper and possibly a small shovel.
- Allow yourself extra distance between your vehicle and the vehicle in front of you. This is especially true at intersections where other motorists may be skidding and having difficulty in stopping their vehicle.
- Remember to brake slowly to avoid skidding
- Allow yourself extra time to get to your destination, as you will likely be travelling at a slower speed than normal. This is especially true of vehicles that are travelling behind a snowplow.

## **16. REVIEW OF POLICY**

The Highway Department will keep on file comments and complaints regarding this policy. This policy will be reviewed periodically and will consider comments received since the last review.