

**WINONA COUNTY
HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT**

**SNOW AND ICE CONTROL
POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

The Winona County Highway Department, like most county highway departments in greater Minnesota, operates under a limited budget with a limited number of snowplows and snowplow operators. For purposes of establishing appropriate levels of service, within the limitations and capabilities of the department and commensurate with the needs of road users, the county road system has been divided into three service level categories. These service level categories are defined below and the service level routes are identified on the accompanying map.

SERVICE LEVEL 1 - SERVICE PERIOD: 4:30 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. weekdays
5:30 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. weekends & holidays
COLOR CODE: RED

County highways within this service level category are high traffic volume routes. Traffic volumes typically remain high well into the evening hours. The majority of these routes are located in the vicinity of the City of Winona. They are connecting links between TH 61 and major intersections to the south. Snow and ice control services are provided on these highways between 4:30 a.m. and 10:00 p.m. on weekdays and 5:30 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. on weekends & holidays.

SERVICE LEVEL 2 - SERVICE PERIOD: 4:30 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. weekdays
5:30 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. weekends & holidays
COLOR CODE: GREEN

County highways within this service level category typically have moderate level traffic volumes which diminish in the early evening hours. Roads within this category are located over wide areas of the county. Snow and ice control services are provided on these highways between 4:30 a.m. and 8:00 p.m. on weekdays and 5:30 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. on weekends & holidays.

SERVICE LEVEL 3 - SERVICE PERIOD: 4:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. weekdays
5:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. weekends & holidays
COLOR CODE: MAGENTA

County highways within this service level category typically have low traffic volumes which diminish shortly after the end of day light hours. Road surfacing may be either paved or rock. These roads are located in sparsely populated areas primarily in the southern and western extremities of the county. Snow and ice control services are provided on these highways between 4:30 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. on weekdays and 5:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. on weekends & holidays.

SNOW PLOW CALL-OUT PROCEDURES

Snow plows will be called out and dispatched by the highway maintenance superintendent, the shop foreman in the absence of the superintendent or the County Engineer. Snow plows will be called out during the service level periods identified elsewhere within this policies and procedures document. The highway department will notify the sheriff's office when snow plows have been called-out at times other than the normal office hours. (7:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.)

Under severe blizzard conditions, when it is determined that the snow plows are ineffectual and there continued operation is dangerous to the equipment and operators, the plows will be called-in until the blizzard conditions subside. The sheriff's office and local radio and television stations will be notified if and when this occurs.

ROAD CONDITION REPORTS

The highway department subscribes to a 24 hour weather service. When the weather service warns of approaching snow and ice storms, the radar screens are closely monitored and roads within the storm area will be driven and reviewed prior to the 4:30 a.m. snow emergency start time. The highway maintenance superintendent will contact the sheriff's dispatcher to notify him/her of his presence on the road and may request additional road condition information received from deputies on patrol.

Road condition reports received from highway workers and deputies are usually highly reliable. Road condition reports received from private citizens are not always reliable. The person receiving the road condition call should always ask the caller to identify themselves by name. Many unreliable road condition reports can be avoided when this practice is followed. Reliable road condition reports should be forwarded to the highway department.

The decision on how to correct the adverse road condition should always be made by an experienced highway worker

CAPABILITIES AND LIMITATIONS

There are 780 lane miles within the county road system. At maximum capacity the highway department will have 15 plows operating on the county road system. A plow will typically make three passes over a road to provide reasonable driving conditions. The number of lane miles, number of plows and required number of passes will consume an eight hour day under average snow storm conditions. Providing the extended snow and ice control coverage on high priority roads always results in overtime. As overtime hours increase, snow plow accident potential and equipment breakdowns due to operator inattentiveness will also increase. Consequently, overtime is minimized to the full extent practical for reasons of safety as well as budgetary reasons.

For snow emergencies occurring outside of the normal work hours, approximately 45 minutes to one hour will lapse between the time that the snow plow operators are called in to the time that the plows arrive on the roads. During this time lapse the operators are reporting to their stations. Sand and deicing chemicals are being mixed proportionately for the storm and temperature

conditions. Trucks are loaded with salt-sand mixtures. The county will also load city and township trucks at this time due to existing cooperative arrangements. Trucks are not left loaded overnight except in cases of extreme emergencies as the destructive effects of deicing salts will destroy the truck box and accessories within one winter season.

Deicing salt becomes ineffective as pavement temperatures fall below 15 degrees. For this reason, roads may remain snow packed during cold temperatures. The department will scrape the roads with motor graders and apply sand for traction. However, bare pavements can not be expected until pavement temperatures rise to or above 15 degrees. Pavement temperatures are normally a few degrees higher than outside air temperatures. Snow packed road conditions can be anticipated when the outside air temperatures are in the single digit to below zero range. The number of days a road will remain snow packed will be determined by the number of days the pavement temperature will exceed 15 degrees and the depth of the snow pack.

OTHER ROAD EMERGENCIES

Snow storms are seldom high level road emergencies. As they occur over large areas and long time frames, drivers become aware of conditions and can often safely reach their destination simply by adjusting their driving speed according to the conditions of the road. This will not be the case for isolated events along the roads. Drivers have little or no advance warning when they encounter an isolated event. Typical examples of isolated events would be:

- A tree down over the road
- A culvert or bridge washed out
- An oil spill within a traffic lane
- A landslide covering or removing a road
- A missing stop sign

Isolated emergencies such as these are high level emergencies and should be immediately reported at anytime 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Assistance for the passage of ambulances, police and fire vehicles should also be requested at any time when necessary. County snow plows will not enter onto private property except when responding to medical, police or fire emergencies.

REQUEST FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT ASSISTANCE

There will be times when the highway department will request assistance from law enforcement agencies. This will typically be for the following instances:

1. Vehicles parked on roads during snow emergencies.

Vehicles parked along roads during snow emergencies hamper the efforts of snow

removal operations and can be dangerous to snow plows and other vehicles traveling the road. Snow emergency parking restrictions and authorization for towing is covered under Minnesota Statutes 169, "Traffic Regulations." When parked vehicles are blocking snow removal operations, the highway department will contact the appropriate law enforcement agency and ask that the vehicle be towed. The highway department shall furnish information as to vehicle description, license number and location.

2. Persons depositing snow on roads.

With some frequency a person will unwittingly plow their driveway and deposit the snow on a road. The compacted snow pile will frequently have a sufficient mass to cause a snow plow to lose control and overturn when struck. Depositing snow on roads is a misdemeanor under Minnesota Statute 160.27. When this occurs, the highway department will issue a warning citation to the violator. If the depositing of snow continues after a warning has been issued, the highway department will request assistance from the appropriate law enforcement agency.

MAIL BOX DAMAGE COMPLAINTS

The Winona County Highway Department follows a mail box damage policy that is practiced by all Minnesota Counties and the Minnesota Department of Transportation. The policy provides that the county is liable and responsible for the repair or replacement of a mail box when it has been physically struck by a county snow plow. If the mail box has not been struck by a plow but was damaged or destroyed by the pressure of the plowed snow, the mail box owner is responsible for the repair or replacement of the mail box. Callers with mail box damage complaints should be referred to the county highway office during the normal business hours. All complaints are investigated.