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Policy 828**

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## **SNOW AND ICE REMOVAL**

### **.1 PURPOSE**

The purpose of this policy is:

- To help snowplow and sanding truck operators and their supervisors prioritize plowing and sanding work on County roadways.
- To set public policy on snow and ice removal on county roadways, other public roadways, private roads, and other public and private property.

This policy supersedes and replaces all previous policies and/or resolutions regarding snow plowing and sanding.

### **.2 APPLICABILITY**

This policy applies to the Clallam County Department of Public Works, Road Division, and its employees.

### **.4 GENERAL POLICIES**

As a preface to these guidelines, it must be understood that snow and ice storms and freezing ground temperatures are highly variable from event to event. Some snow and ice storms and icy conditions will dissipate before action is warranted. Other snow and ice storms and icy conditions may extend for several days. Some snow and ice storms and icy conditions may be concentrated in mountainous areas and others may be concentrated in the low lands. Sometimes snow and ice conditions may occur in one part of the County and not in other parts, while at other times they are scattered across various areas throughout the entire County. These guidelines must remain flexible due to the infinitely variable nature of weather events, and must allow human judgment to be considered when making any decisions regarding the timing and selection of those roads needing plowing or sanding. By and large, crews are well experienced in performing this work, having learned what is needed through their years of experience. However extensive the County's efforts, there is no assurance that a roadway will be completely clear of snow and ice. The County's efforts are not a substitute for well maintained, properly equipped vehicles and responsible driving on the part of the roadway users.

#### **4.1 Weather Monitoring**

Road supervisors will monitor weather via Weathernet or other appropriate means (should the subscription to Weathernet be discontinued). At the time these guidelines are written, Weathernet is considered the most reliable source of weather forecasting. Weather will also be monitored by direct observation depending on the time of day, staff availability and funding, by notification from Sheriff dispatch, by calls to or from outlying

employees at work or at home, by conversations with citizens (including area contacts), by conversations with employees at other agencies involved with snow plowing and road sanding (such as the Washington State Department of Transportation), by conversations with school transportation supervisors, by television and radio weather reports, and by other means found useful.

#### 4.2 Equipment Preparation

If the County's weather forecast information predicts significant snowfall, to the extent that the road supervisor anticipates snow plowing will be needed the following day, plows will be typically be mounted on the trucks prior to the end of the current work day. Plows will also typically be mounted on trucks prior to long weekends if the County's long-term weather forecast information predicts snow. However, for trucks which will be parked overnight indoors to keep them from freezing, plows will not be pre-mounted if the truck/plow combination will not readily fit indoors.

If the County's weather forecast information predicts icy roads, to the extent that the road supervisor anticipates sanding will be needed the following day, sand will typically be loaded into trucks prior to the end of the current work day. Sand will also typically be loaded into the trucks prior to long weekends if the County's long-term weather forecast information predicts icing.

#### 4.3 Employee Notification and Shifts

If snow or ice develops during working hours, drivers and crew may be dispatched at any time. If snow or ice is anticipated during the night, drivers and crews will generally be notified by 5:00 p.m. the evening before plowing or sanding is needed. Surprise storms require that notification occurs in the early morning hours.

In general, for overnight snowfalls, crews will arrive at 6:00 a.m. (and earlier for deep snow). On school days, efforts will be made to give high priority to the plowing of school bus routes. There are many more school busses and bus routes than there are snow plows, so the real possibility exists that some busses will travel on unplowed routes. On non-school days, plowing will generally commence half an hour to an hour later than it would if school was in session. In all cases snow plowing will generally cease at approximately 7:00 p.m., or earlier if the degree of plowing is adequate or the crews are fatigued or shorthanded.

In general, for overnight freezes, crews will arrive at 6:00 a.m. (and earlier for a hard freeze). On school days, efforts will be made to give high priority to the sanding of school bus routes. There are many more school busses and bus routes than there are sanding trucks, so the real possibility exists that some busses will travel on unsanded routes. On non-school days, sanding will generally commence half an hour to an hour later than it otherwise would if school was in session. In all cases sanding will generally

cease at approximately 7:00 p.m., or earlier if the degree of sanding is adequate or the crews are fatigued or shorthanded.

#### 4.4 Plowing and/or Sanding of Other Than County Roads

- a. Pursuant to written agreement, the County will cooperate with other agencies such as the cities and the State to plow their roads en route to County roads.
- b. Pursuant to written agreement, the County will plow driveways for fire halls, schools, and similar public agencies located along County roads. Plowing will generally be accomplished when County equipment is in the area on plowing routes.
- c. Private driveways may be blocked by snow pushed aside by County snowplows. For the County to stop to unblock each driveway would tremendously slow the County's productivity toward plowing roads. It is the policy of the County not to open blockages of private driveways, private roads, or other private accesses to County roads caused by County snowplowing. Citizens should be prepared to open the blockage between their driveway and the County road. Private services are available in the community for such purposes.
- d. The County does not plow or sand private roadways or driveways.

#### 4.5 Procedures for Dealing with Road Conditions

Plowing will typically be performed when there is enough snow to make plowing possible and necessary—typically considered to be a minimum of approximately two (2) inches in depth. In general, crews will defer plowing roads with light snowfall in favor of routes with deeper snowfall. Sometimes snow falling in warmer times of the year melts before plows can do much good. Such snow may not need to be plowed.

When ice is encountered during reconnaissance on a sanding route, sand will typically be applied to aid traction. Depending upon the situation, however, sometimes the limited supply of sand in the truck is reserved for more problematic areas, while less problematic areas are left unsanded. Sand is generally not applied when snow is falling because subsequent snow covers the sand, because subsequent plowing would remove the sand, and because traction in fresh snow is not so dependent on sand.

When slush is encountered during reconnaissance on a plowing route and if freezing is anticipated, efforts will be made to remove as much slush from the roads as is feasible prior to its freezing—time, equipment, and manpower permitting.

Plowing roads with snow plows leaves a clear area only as wide as the plow. If additional snowfall is anticipated, road graders may be used to widen the plowed area so there is room for the new snow to be plowed into.

#### 4.6 Prioritization of Roadwork

Because crew sizes are limited and because some roads are more important and are more highly traveled than others, the County road network will be divided into multiple routes with a truck and driver assigned to each route. The following guidelines will be implemented when multiple County roads need attention at the same time:

- a. Drivers will drive a logical, efficient route. These routes may vary from storm to storm. At times, a non-priority remote road may be treated when the driver is in the area of the road, instead of leaving it untreated and having to drive many miles to return to it later.
- b. Arterial and collector roads, heavily traveled roads, and school bus routes will generally be given highest priority when laying out each route. School districts often have their own abbreviated snow routes, which avoid the more hazardous roads. County crews will take this into consideration when setting their daily routes.
- c. Local access roads and lesser-traveled roads will be given lower priority.
- d. Snow plowing and sanding will generally first be done in known trouble spots. This typically applies to some hills, some curves, and some intersections.
- e. When snow has re-accumulated on a road or when sand has been blown off a road prior to all roads being treated, the truck driver and/or the road supervisor will determine whether or not to return to that road and re-plow or re-sand it prior to finishing all other roads.
- f. As scheduling, manpower, time, and equipment allows, plowing will generally be re-done after two (2) inches of snow have again accumulated, and sanding will be redone, if needed, after sand has been blown off the surface.

#### 4.7 Other Considerations

In the initial phases of a snowfall (and during continued snowfall), snow may accumulate to depths well over two (2) inches. It may take several hours or days for the snow plows to catch up and get all roads under control.

Prior to snow plowing, ordinary traffic may use the roads—resulting in compact snow and ice that is difficult for snow plows to remove. In these situations, the County will

remove compact snow and ice to the depth feasible, recognizing that the residual may be thicker than desired.

Drivers may become fatigued if storms or freezing conditions go on for more than a few days. Single shifts may put a driver behind the steering wheel for many hours. Running two shifts may help relieve this somewhat, but running two shifts may leave both shifts short on employees. When crews are fatigued they will be given breaks or be sent home early. The County does not want to endanger the employees nor the public by putting fatigued drivers on the road. Contract workers will be considered in protracted storms.

County crew size is limited. The County will shift crews from district to district, when feasible, to assist where needed.

Breakdowns of equipment can and do happen, and may result in decreased productivity.

Chemicals are not typically used by the County for snow or ice control. Some experimentation has been done with chemical deicers. At this time, equipment limitations, economic considerations, and environmental considerations limit the use of chemical deicers. Chemical deicers also have significantly different characteristics compared to the application of sand.

#### 4.8 Removal of Vehicles in Roadway

The County generally does not remove vehicles stuck or stranded in the roadway during extreme weather. County snowplow and sanding vehicles are not equipped for safe and efficient towing of other vehicles. In addition, stopping to remove stranded vehicles delays the County's limited resources. It is the policy of the County to notify law enforcement of stranded vehicles. The County operator may also assist in limited hand work such as shoveling or pushing. Exceptions may be made, at the discretion of the County operator, in the below listed circumstances. When making the decision to assist, the County operator will consider whether he/she feels safe and is comfortable with the towing or pushing operation; the assistance needed does not appear to create undue risk of personal or property damage; and rendering assistance is judged not to have significant adverse effect on snow plowing or sanding operations.

- a. Vehicle stuck or disabled in the traveled lanes of the roadway in such a manner or location so as to block the roadway or present an extreme danger to other motorists, such as a blind corner.
- b. Stuck or disabled vehicles belonging to other governmental agencies that are responsible for public safety during the weather event.

When a vehicle is towed or pushed by a County vehicle, the driver/owner, if available, will sign a County form acknowledging that damage may occur and releasing the County from any liability and also agreeing to reimburse the county its costs, if billed. In addition, the driver/owner, if available will attach the chain or other device used to tow the vehicle to the vehicle being towed. Vehicles towed by the County will be towed to the nearest safe location.

#### 4.9 Exceptions

Exceptions may need to be made from time to time, including (but not limited to) the following situations.

- a. When responding to emergencies or accidents.
- b. Fallen power lines, fallen trees, and slides may inhibit operations. These situations will be handled on a case-by-case basis.
- c. Snowplows and sanders will not be sent out in situations that are judged to be extraordinarily hazardous to the employee or to equipment such as restricted visibility, blizzard-like conditions, around live downed power lines, or in forested areas during heavy winds.
- d. Due to snow plowing efforts (particularly during heavy snowfalls), ditches may become filled with snow, thus limiting further plowing. Trucks may become unable to plow two-lane widths and may only be able to plow one lane. In these cases drainage of melted snow may also be hindered.
- e. Some County roads are too steep for snow plows, other snow removal equipment, and sand trucks to ascend. Consequently, these roads will need to be left unattended until the weather changes to the point that equipment can get to them.
- f. The County Engineer, Public Works Director, or Administrator may authorize exceptions to this policy on a case by case basis.