

Meeker County Highway Department

Policy For: Snow & Ice Removal

PREFACE:

The following Policy has been established to provide guidelines for the public and for plow operators to follow in order to ensure consistent practices for snow and ice removal during winter storm events. Our goal is to have all County Roads passable within a reasonable amount of time after a snowfall has stopped. Our plowing priorities reflect a commitment to insuring that key roads are kept open to serve critical facilities and to provide access between state highways and our communities.

BACKGROUND:

Meeker County maintains approximately 274 miles of County State Aid Highway. It also has a maintenance contract with the Townships to maintain most of their 776 miles of roadways.

BASIS OF POLICY:

The decision to plow and or sand will be made by the County Engineer and /or Maintenance Superintendent based on the following guidelines:

1. The County will NOT dispatch plows until after the snowfall and /or wind has stopped; EXCEPT (a) in an emergency or other special circumstance, or (b) when conditions allow reasonable accomplishment to be made.
2. The County will perform snow removal on bituminous roads when county received appreciable accumulation, generally 1 to 2 inches of snow.
3. The County will typically perform snow removal on gravel roads when accumulation exceeds 3 inches.
4. The County will perform ice control measures when icy conditions seriously affect public travel. The County will furnish all ice control material.

5. The County practices may change, in some circumstances, due to weather conditions, equipment failure, and/or personnel.

HOURS OF OPERATION:

The County is staffed for one shift of snow and ice removal. In a snow event, the necessary County personnel will be mobilized by their Foreman at 4:30 AM, with ALL necessary equipment on the road by 5:00 AM. Any deviation from the start time must be approved by the County Engineer and/or Maintenance Superintendent.

Weekend and holidays may receive a reduced level of service, due to lower traffic volumes and the limited resources available.

Operator duty shifts are generally limited to a maximum of 12 hours per day for safety reasons; therefore, most routes will not have coverage between 4:30 PM and 5:00 AM the next morning.

Operations will be halted when: (a) service levels are reached, (b) coverage time has elapsed, (c) conditions are too hazardous, (d) reasonable accomplishment cannot be made, (e) when MnDOT closed the highways under their jurisdiction or, (f) when a "NO TRAVEL" advisory is issued.

ROAD PRIORITIES:

It is the goal of the Highway Department to serve the majority of the public in the quickest way possible, with this in mind; roads with higher traffic volumes will *typically* receive higher priority. The following are the priorities plow operators will attempt to adhere to.

1. All County State Aid Highway (CSAH) lying within cities. These are always paved.
2. Major CSAH roads which carry heavy traffic volumes and connect cities, State Highways, neighboring Counties, or are Intra-County corridors. These are always paved.
3. CSAH routes that provide rural area access to cities and State Highways. These are always paved.

4. Township roads that carry heavy traffic volumes and provide access for numerous rural residents. These are always paved.
5. Low volume CSAH roads that may serve as mail and/or school bus routes but serve few rural residents. These usually are gravel.
6. Township roads that are dead ends. These usually are gravel. Gravel roads may not be plowed all the time. Plowing of gravel roads will be based on amount and type of snow.

PROPERTY DAMAGE:

Mailboxes, fences, hedges, trees, etc. damaged during snow and ice removal is evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Only those items that were damaged by actual contact with County equipment will be repaired at the County's expense, provided they were located and installed properly. (See Meeker County website for Mailbox Policy.)

REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE:

Requests for assistance will be generally classified as emergency or non-emergency and will be handled accordingly.

DECLARED EMERGENCY:

An emergency situation is one that may be classified as a bona fide police, medical or fire emergency that is potentially life threatening and requires the involvement of emergency vehicles such as police, ambulance or fire trucks. Dispatch of county equipment shall be ordered by the County Engineer (or his/her designee) only at the request of the Sheriff's emergency response team or 911 system. It is the responsibility of the Sheriff's emergency response team to evaluate each situation as to the validity of the declared emergency. Once an emergency situation is determined to exist and a request for assistance has been issued through the Sheriff's department, the County Engineer (or his/her designee) will order the dispatch of county equipment under the following conditions:

1. Request for assistance has been received from the Sheriff's office or emergency dispatcher.
2. Assurance that an emergency vehicle(s), (police, ambulance or fire truck) with qualified personnel in attendance will be enroute.
3. The situation is potentially life threatening.

In a declared emergency, the County will dispatch a minimum of two units, usually one tandem truck snow plow and one motor grader to serve as escort for the emergency vehicle(s). The responsibility for coordination and execution of the mission shall be a mutual agreement between the Sheriff's department, emergency personnel, and plow operators, **with the plow operators to have the final ending decision.** It is the intent of this directive to save lives, not endanger others because of hasty, ill-prepared decisions. The dispatch of county equipment shall be on an availability basis as operators are not on an "on call" status similar to police, ambulance or fire personnel.

NON-EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE

All non-emergency responses will be at the request of the County Sheriff. Non-emergency requests for assistance can be classified as being non-life threatening in nature and not requiring emergency vehicle(s) participation. These would include stranded motorists, livestock confinement operations, private parties request for fuel/groceries, etc., or any other situations that are deemed non-life threatening.

If the county responds to a non-emergency request for assistance, the county will dispatch a minimum of two units, usually one tandem truck snow plow and one motor grader. The responsibility for coordination and execution of the mission shall be a mutual agreement between the Sheriff's Department, the County Engineer (or his/her designee) and the plow operators, **with the plow operators to have the final ending decision.** It is the intent of this directive to save lives and property, not endanger others because of hasty, ill-prepared decisions. The dispatch of county equipment shall be on an availability basis as operators are not on an "on call" status similar to police, ambulance or fire personnel. Such

responses shall be billed to the requesting party at overtime rates with a minimum of two hours of time per unit dispatched.

UTILITY COMPANIES:

Utility companies and their responsibilities present a unique situation and each case should be considered independently after evaluation by the Sheriff, Utility Company and County crews.

STRANDED MOTORISTS:

Stranded motorist who become stuck in snow banks pose a unique situation for Highway Personnel due to potential liability problems encountered when attempting to dislodge the stuck vehicle. For this reason plow operators will NOT attempt to remove a stuck vehicle unless: (a) directed to by law enforcement, (b) the vehicle is creating an endangerment to the traveling public and there is the possibility that life or health is in danger, or (c) is hindering snow removal operations. Operators will always be ready to summon help at the motorist's request via two-way radio and other available communications devices.

ROAD CLOSURES:

Meeker County fully intends to keep the County Road System open for safe travel for all users; however, there will be times that this will simply not be possible due extreme weather conditions. When Meeker County snow plows are pulled from their routes due to the above conditions, the Sheriff's Office and local media will be notified.

RESIDENTIAL PLOWING:

County residents are reminded that it is unlawful, under Minnesota Statute 160.27m sub.5., to deposit snow from driveways on to or next to a public highway or street. Piles of snow left on or near the road can freeze into a solid mass creating a hazardous situation for vehicles and snowplows. Piles of snow increase the chance of drifting snow onto the roadway. Accidents and damages caused by snow piles placed in the roadway may result in liability to the property owner.

SUMMARY OF THE POLICY:

This Policy was developed to provide guidelines for both County personnel and the traveling public. This policy intends to cover the majority of situations normally encountered in winter storm events. If certain situations arise that are not part of the above Policy, the County Engineer (or his/her designee) will deal with them on a case-by-case basis.

Effective Date of Policy: 11-7-17



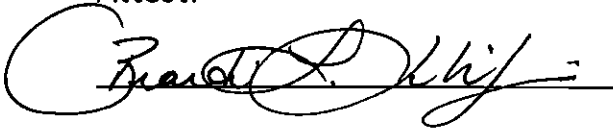
Chairperson Meeker County

11-7-17

Date

Meeker County Board of Commissioners

Attest:



County Attorney

11-13-2017

Date