Town of Simsbury

66 TOWN FOREST ROAD, P.O. BOX 495, SIMSBURY, CONNECTICUT 06070

~ Department of Public Works ~

SIMSBURY DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS SNOW REMOVAL & ICE CONTROL OPERATIONS & GUIDELINES

General

Simsbury Public Works is charged with the responsibility of responding to winter snow and icing events with the goal of providing cost effective snow removal and ice control that will keep the town's 164 miles of roadway passable during storm events, minimize the hazards caused by slippery road conditions and help restore safe traveling conditions throughout the town as soon as possible after each winter storm. Snow removal on town roadways is an extremely difficult task and we appreciate your patience during snow and icing events. Our plow drivers, often referred to as "snow fighters" work long hours in hazardous driving conditions to help assure that our goals are met and the citizens of Simsbury receive the high level of service they deserve.

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Snow Removal and Ice Control Overview:

Winter weather in New England is difficult to predict with many variables affecting winter maintenance operations, such as: type of precipitation, air & pavement temperatures, traffic, wind, time of day, and day of the week. Winter maintenance in New England can be more of an art than an exact science.
The Department's snow removal and ice control policy is based on providing cost effective snow and ice removal that will keep the town's roadways passable during storm events, minimize the hazards caused by slippery road conditions, and help restore safe traveling conditions throughout the town as soon as possible after each winter storm.

Snow Routes, Operations and Priorities:

The 164 miles of town roads have been divided into 12 snow routes shown on the attached map (click here to view map). In general, one large snow plow is assigned to each of the 12 snow routes, with 1 to 3 smaller trucks used to assist the larger trucks. A single truck and driver are assigned to each route for the entire winter season. By keeping the same driver on a single snow route, the driver becomes

experienced with the specific trouble spots on the route and will be more efficient at removing snow. An additional benefit is that citizen requests and the occasional complaint can be conveyed to our drivers. Occasionally, circumstances will require drivers to change routes.

***Priorities**:*
During storm events the primary focus for snow removal will be to provide a safe travel way for cars and emergency vehicles on heavily traveled roadways. While snow is actively falling, plowing is generally limited to the center portion of the roadway to clear a path wide enough for one travel lane in each direction. As a winter storm subsides and the plow crews gain a level of control over the storm, more effort can be directed to local roadways and cul-de-sacs. Please note that depending on the severity of the storm, it can take up to 4 hours to make passes on all streets in town. Snow operations often continue for 8 to 12 hours after precipitation has stopped falling and each street has been cleared to the edge of pavement.

Spot Sanding:
When icy conditions are present, the town may initiate "spot sanding" operations where five trucks are dispatched to apply salt or sand/salt mix to hilly areas and known icy spots throughout the town. Due to the hilly terrain and changes in elevation in Simsbury, some areas may experience slippery conditions while other areas may not have any precipitation or simply rain. In dispatching trucks for spot sanding, the shift supervisor will rely on reports from the plow drivers and police officers, air and roadway temperatures, and past experience to determine the appropriate locations to apply salt or sand.

Use of Sand and Salt:
Snow removal and ice control requires the application of either chemicals (including salt), abrasives (sand) or a chemical-abrasive mixture to the roadway surface. Choice of materials is dependent upon weather and road conditions. Materials currently used by the town of Simsbury include treated salt and sand. Treated salt is standard rock salt with chemical additives that allow it to work at lower temperatures and to stick to the roadway.

For the majority of winter storms our plow crews will be using straight treated salt on the Town's roadways. This is a change from our past practice of using a sand/salt mix for our snow removal operations. We are moving to the use of treated salt for several reasons, including: the environmental impact of sand from our roads silting up local streams and waterways, and to reduce our springtime cleanup costs.

State Roads:
Several state roads cross through Simsbury, including: Hop Meadow Street (Rt.10/202), West Street and Bushy Hill Road (Rt. 169), Simsbury Road (Route 185), Farms Village and West Street (Rt. 309), and Tariffville Road (Rt. 315). The Connecticut Department of Transportation (ConnDOT) is responsible for the snow and ice removal on these roadways. If you have any questions or concerns regarding these roadways, please contact the ConnDOT Avon Maintenance Facility at (860) 677-0953.

Parking Bans:
In accordance with Simsbury Town Ordinance (Article I, 149-2, A) it is illegal to park on any public roadway while snow operations are in progress. Normal snow operations may continue for up to 12 hours following the end of a snow event. Vehicles that violate the parking ban are subject to fines and may be towed at the owner's expense. Residents are urged to cooperate with the parking ban to facilitate the removal of snow from town's roadways.

Mailbox Damage:
During the winter season it is inevitable that some mailboxes and posts will fall victim to winter's forces. Simsbury's policy is to reimburse residents $25 for mailboxes and $25 for mailbox posts that are damaged as the result of direct contact with a town snow plow. Mailboxes that are damaged from the force of snow thrown against them or mailboxes that are located closer than 9-inches to the roadway are not eligible for reimbursement. In the event that your mailbox has been damaged, please report the incident to the Department of Public Works at (860) 658-3222. Upon receiving a report of mailbox damage, a Public Works Supervisor will investigate the damage to the mailbox/post and make a determination of the cause of the damage.

Where possible, the Public Works staff will attempt to provide a temporary repair to the mailbox while on site. A written response on the findings of the investigation will be mailed with a check if appropriate. For more information on the Town's policy and proper placement of mailboxes, please click here.

Sidewalk Clearing:
Residents are reminded that by Simsbury Town Ordinance (Article I, 137-1, A) it is the responsibility of owners and occupants of buildings to remove snow, sleet and ice from public sidewalks abutting their property within 24 hours after the storm has concluded. Failure to comply with this ordinance may result in a $90 fine. Please remember that the final snow plow pass is not made until several hours after the storm has concluded. Our snow plow drivers are directed to try and minimize the amount of snow directed onto previously cleaned sidewalks and driveways, but it is often times unavoidable.
Your cooperation in clearing the sidewalks is an essential safety measure for school children and other pedestrians using the sidewalks.

Trash Containers:
Trash containers should be placed at the end of your driveway at a location accessible to the trash hauler at least 2-feet from the roadway. Trash containers should not be placed on snow banks. During major storm events, residents are encouraged to hold off a week from their regularly scheduled weekly trash pick-up day.

Fire Hydrants:
As a voluntary measure, residents are asked to clear snow from around fire hydrants adjacent to their property. In the event of a fire in your neighborhood, this could save the fire department precious moments that could make a tremendous difference in their fire-fighting effort.

Catch Basins and Storm Water Inlets:
The town asks for assistance in clearing snow from around catch basins to allow for melting snow and rain to drain off the roadway. This will help to prevent icing and flooding on the roadway. This includes keeping catch basin grates free of leaves and other debris all year long.

Plowing or Throwing Snow onto Roadways:
Property owners and their contractors who put snow back into the roadway create a hazardous condition for motorists and additional work for our plow crews. Clearing snow into the roadway is a violation of town ordinance and is punishable by a $90 fine.

Driveway Clearing Tips:
The following suggestions are intended to make your driveway snow removal easier and safer:
• If possible, wait until the road has been completely plowed to the curb before shoveling the last 5-10 feet of your driveway. This way less snow from the road will end up in your driveway. It takes several hours after a typical storm has ended for the town to completely clear the snow from the road to the curb.
• When clearing snow at the end of the driveway, it is best to place snow on the far side of your driveway away from the direction the plow is traveling. In most cases, this means placing the snow on the right side of your driveway as you face the road. This way the plow will carry more snow away from your driveway.
• Do not shovel, blow, or plow snow from your driveway into or across the road. It is a violation of town ordinance to push snow into the street and you may be held liable if this snow causes an accident. Remember, you are responsible for the actions of your contractor.
• Do not allow children to play on snow banks along the side of the road. The town may need to push back snow banks days after a storm to create room for the next snow event.

Other Department of Public Works Snow Removal Responsibilities:
In addition to the responsibility of clearing town roads, Public Works is also responsible for snow removal at several commuter parking lots and around town buildings, including: Town Hall, Eno Memorial Hall, the Simsbury Public Library, and Scout Hall. In some cases, snow removal at these facilities has been contracted out to local contractors.

Snow Removal by Other Town Departments:

Whereas Public Works is responsible for snow removal on roadways, commuter lots and town buildings, other town departments are responsible for snow removal at their respective facilities. The Board of Education is responsible for plowing all school facilities and the Parks and Recreation Department clears snow at the town parks, the Simsbury Farms complex, parking lots for Murphy Apartments, and select town managed sidewalks.

Emergencies

Residents are advised to call 911 in the event of an emergency. If there is a problem with roadway access for Police or emergency vehicles, the Simsbury police will work with the Public Works Department to coordinate an escort plow.

Use of Sand and Common Salt vs. Treated Salt:

For many years the use of sodium chloride (common salt) combined with sand and snow plowing was considered the most economical and safest method available for snow removal and ice control. The Connecticut Department of Transportation (ConnDOT) and many of the surrounding towns have over the past ten years moved away from common salt and are now using treated salt (anti-icing agents). These treated salts are typically applied directly to the roadway with little if any sand in the mixture. The treated salt can be applied as either a solid or a liquid. The cost for the treated salt is higher than common salt and the application rates are less than traditional sand/salt mixtures. The use of treated salt requires far more salt in a given year than would be used compared with a sand/salt mixture. Although more treated salt is applied to the roadway, many towns are reporting cost savings associated with the use of treated salt, due to the reduction in spring cleanup operations (street sweeping and catch basin cleaning).

Beginning in the 2009/2010 winter season the Simsbury Highway Department will begin using treated salt on all of the Town's roadways. This will result in several changes that will be evident to our residents. The most notable change is our plow crews will be applying treated salt to the Town's roadways before it snows. This pre-treating of the roadways allows the treated salt to "stick" to the bare pavement and when the snow falls the salt will form a brine layer that will prevent the snow from freezing to the roadway surface. This brine layer is the key to the use of treated salt. This brine layer allows for cars and trucks to have traction as the tires will push through the slushy snow and make direct contact with the roadway. The other major change residents will notice is that there will no longer be the brown sand in the roadway. Many drivers used these patches as areas with better traction. Without the sand, there is no loner the brown patches; instead, drivers can look for the areas of snow that look wet or grey. These are locations where the salt is actively melting the snow, forming the brine layer.

Free Sand/Salt:

Free sand/salt is available for residents at the town's public works compound on Town Forest Road. The sand is located in a large red bin outside of the fence along the roadway. (Please - No commercial vendors)

Winter Driving Checklist & Tips:

- During storms, travel only when absolutely necessary.
- Keep good all-season or snow tires on your car.
- Keep a shovel and some sand in your trunk.
- Before driving, clean your vehicle of all snow and ice, including the roof.
- Allow extra time to reach your destination.
- Keep a safe distance from plow trucks and other vehicles.

Questions and Concerns during Snow and Ice Storms:

Questions and concerns during snow and ice storms should be directed to the Department of Public Works at (860) 658-3222. After hours calls may be directed to voice mail and will be checked periodically. All emergency calls should be made to Emergency Services at 911