



CITY OF INTERNATIONAL FALLS, MINNESOTA
Public Works Department
200 7th Street
International Falls, MN 56649

City of International Falls

SNOW & ICE CONTROL POLICIES



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Snow and Ice Control Policy

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- Snow Plowing Routes and City owned parking lots

**CITY OF INTERNATIONAL FALLS
PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT
SNOW AND ICE CONTROL POLICY**

I. INTRODUCTION

The City of International Falls believes that it is in the best interest of the residents for the City to assume basic responsibility for control of snow and ice on City streets, sidewalks and parking lots. Reasonable ice and snow control is necessary for routine travel and emergency services. The City will provide such control in a safe and cost-effective manner, keeping in mind safety, budget, personnel and environmental concerns. The City will use City employees and equipment to provide this service. It is not possible or practicable for snow and ice to be fully removed from all surfaces or prevented from accumulating on surfaces. The City encourages and expects that City residents and other members of the traveling public will at all times conduct their activities mindful of conditions, hazards, and what is necessary to remain safe.

II. COMMENCEMENT OF SNOW OR ICE CONTROL OPERATIONS

The Public Works Supervisor will decide when to begin snow or ice control operations. The basic criteria for that decision are:

- A. Snow removal operations will begin when two (2) inches or more accumulate, as road conditions warrant, or when the Public Works Supervisor determines plowing is necessary. Night-time plowing will usually begin at approximately 2:00 A.M. However, starting time may vary according to weather conditions.
- B. Drifting of snow that causes problems for travel;
- C. Icy conditions which seriously affect travel; and
- D. Time of snowfall in relationship to heavy use of streets.

Snow and ice control operations are expensive and involve the use of limited personnel and equipment. Consequently snowplowing operations will not generally be conducted for snowfall of less than two (2) inches or road conditions warrant plowing.



III. MOVEMENT OF SNOW

Snow will be plowed in a manner so as to minimize any traffic obstructions. The center of the roadway will be plowed first with snow being pushed to the boulevard.

Snow will be removed from major arterial streets first, starting at centerline and plowed to the curb. These streets will be maintained even in a blizzard event. These major arterial streets are identified on the plowing maps.

The City recognizes the inconvenience that comes from the accumulations of snow on sidewalks and driveways from plowing operations, however those concerns must be secondary to the benefits of cleaning the streets in an efficient and timely manner. The City is not responsible for removing snow from private driveways and sidewalks.

No business or resident is to move snow or ice across a street without physically picking it up and moving it. It is against both State of Minnesota law and City ordinance to place snow or ice back on the street when cleaning snow or ice from private property.

In times of extreme snowfall, streets will not always immediately be able to be completely cleared of snow from curb to curb. Any additional plowing during a blizzard or heavy snow six (6) inches or above will be determined by emergency needs only. The Public Works Department will coordinate with Police and Fire operations to accommodate emergencies.

IV. SNOW REMOVAL

The Public Works Supervisor will determine when snow will be removed by truck from an area. Such snow removal will occur in areas where there is no room on the boulevard for snow storage and in areas where accumulated piles of snow create a hazardous condition. Snow removal operations will not commence until other snowplowing operations have been completed. Snow removal operations may also be delayed depending on weather conditions and personnel. The snow will be removed and hauled to a snow storage area. The snow storage area will be located so as to minimize environmental impacts.

V. STREET PLOWING PRIORITIES AND SCHEDULE

The City has classified city streets based on the street function, traffic volume, and importance to the welfare of the community. Those streets classified as “Arterial Streets” will be plowed first. These are high volume routes which connect major sections of the City and provide access for emergency fire, police and medical services.

Public Works personnel and equipment will be assigned to plowing and routes before the snow season begins.

Additional snowplowing and salt applications will be conducted when the Public Works Supervisor determines that it is necessary to have plows and distributors on the road. Information regarding conditions will also be received from the Police Department.

In case of severe weather, only arterial streets and emergency plowing will be conducted. Plow trucks are radio-equipped in the event drivers need assistance. The safety of the drivers and the public will always be foremost. All City employees are responsible for their own personal safety, as well as that of fellow employees. The City is split up in to four different plow routes with four different pieces of snow plow equipment that plow and have de-icing capabilities and one additional truck equipped for de-icing only.

Priority sequence of activities to remove snow and ice from city streets, sidewalks and procedures for salt applications on streets in the City of International Falls are as follows:

PRIORITY 1

All arterial streets, trunk highways, municipal state aid roads, county state aid roads, and municipal building parking lot. The following roadways will be plowed from the center of the roadway to the parking lane only, Second Street from Fourth Avenue to Second Avenue as well as Third and Fourth Street from Second Avenue to Sixth Avenue, this area is difficult to maintain during a snow fall event due to a lack of snow storage.

PRIORITY 2

All collector streets, alleys, City owned parking lots, de-icing high priority intersections, and downtown snow removal. All plow operators will assist other plow operators if their routes are completed ahead of schedule and do any cleanup work necessary.

PRIORITY 3

De-icing collector street intersections and City owned parking lots. Main arterial sidewalks cleaning. Removal of snow from collection streets and alleys that have limited snow storage area.

VI. DOWNTOWN SNOW REMOVAL

Downtown snow removal (including parking lots) will commence at approximately 2:00AM. Windrowing and intersection cleaning will begin at 2:00 A.M. Truck loading begins at 3:00 A.M. De-icing chemical will be applied after snow is removed, if necessary. The goal of the City is to always have the downtown area cleaned up within 24 hours of a major snow event but with limited staff and equipment sometimes that is not always possible.

VII. WEATHER CONDITIONS

Snow and ice control operations will be conducted only when weather conditions do not endanger the safety of City employees and equipment. Factors that may delay snow and ice control operations include: severe cold, significant winds and limited visibility.

VIII. USE OF SAND, SALT AND OTHER CHEMICALS

The City will use sand, salt and other chemicals when there is hazardous ice or slippery conditions. The City is always striving to limit the amount of chemical use and still provide a safe traveling road surface.



IX. SIDEWALK SNOW REMOVAL

The City of International Falls has a **Partial Municipality-Led Sidewalk Clearing Policy** which involves splitting the responsibility of snow clearing for sidewalks and trails between the City and property owners. A portion of the City's public sidewalk and bituminous trails are maintained throughout the winter months by the Public Works Department, snow clearing on sidewalks abutting private property are the owners responsibility, and areas where sidewalks are dead ends or are outside a priority area are not required to be cleared in the winter. Sidewalks will be cleared of accumulated snow, but will not be maintained to a "clean pavement" (i.e. one to two inches will remain on sidewalks after snow blowing operations).

PRIORITY 1: SIDEWALKS/TRAILS = CITY RESPONSIBILITY

These areas are considered high pedestrian traffic areas, bituminous trails, business district areas with minimal snow storage available, and school route areas.

As there are a limited number of personnel available, sidewalk cleaning will begin within 24hrs of a significant snowfall and continue until complete unless interrupted by changing weather conditions, equipment failure or other factors. The City will maintain sidewalks by moving snow with a snow blower or broom. Sidewalks along major arterial roads such as arterial streets, trunk highways, municipal state aid roads, county state aid roads which are impacted by plowing operations of other agencies, will be open as feasible during winter months. Sidewalks will be cleared as close as feasible to pedestrian push-button pedestals.

PRIORITY 2: SIDEWALKS = PROPERTY OWNERS' RESPONSIBILITY

Residential and Commercial property owners with a Priority 2 sidewalk abutting their property will be responsible to remove the snow from the sidewalk within 48 hours of a snowfall.

It is against both State of Minnesota law and City ordinance to place snow or ice back on the street when cleaning snow or ice from private property.



Mailbox Damage and Issues

Is your mailbox designed to stand up to the rigors of the winter snow plowing season? What happens if your mailbox is damaged by plowing activities?

Mailbox damage is an unfortunate consequence of snowplowing. The Public Works Department will inspect each mailbox damage claim. If there is physical evidence that the mailbox was struck by a plow or other piece of equipment, a temporary mailbox will be installed. Then in the spring, repairs are made to conforming installation with a 3 or 4' swing-away mailbox post provided and installed by the City.

Mailboxes should be installed and maintained to withstand snow coming off the end of the plow. If damage occurs to your mailbox due to snow discharge or snow storage, a temporary mailbox is installed. Then in the spring, repairs are made to conforming installation with a 3 or 4' swing-away mailbox post provided and installed by the City. In this situation if a homeowner does not want the City provided post and conforming installation the homeowner will be responsible for their own repairs.

All mailboxes must be installed according to USPS guidelines and should be able to hold up to the snow coming off the plow.

Residents are responsible for keeping the area in front of their mailboxes clear for USPS deliveries.



Boulevard/Right of Way Damage

Plow operators make every effort to avoid damage to boulevard areas while performing snow removal. This can be especially tricky in areas where there is no curb. The boulevard area on most streets is part of the City right of way which extends approximately 10 to 15 feet behind the curb. The intent of the right of way is to provide room for snow storage, utilities, and sidewalks. Lawns that are scraped or gouged by City equipment will be repaired by top dressing and seeding in the spring of the year. Residents are required to assist by watering the areas that are repaired. Other items in the right-of-way including landscaping timbers, shrubs, flowers, other landscaping, etc. will not be repaired by the City. Boulevard damage can be reported to the Public Works Supervisor at 218-283-4403 or by using the “Report a Problem” option through the City Website [www.ci.international-falls.mn.us].



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT SNOW PLOWING IN INTERNATIONAL FALLS

When does the city start plowing?

This depends on storm projections. In general, however, plowing of arterial residential streets begins by 2:00 a.m.

How long does it take to complete the plowing?

During average winter conditions, it takes eight to nine hours to complete snow removal operations on City streets, up to two days for sidewalks, parking lots, and snow removal from the Downtown.

Which streets are plowed first? Does the city always follow the same order for plowing streets?

Major arterial streets and the downtown streets are the first to receive maintenance. Residential streets and alleys are cleared next, followed by the plowing of parking lots, and sidewalks. The city strives to conduct operations consistently from storm to storm. This increases both effectiveness and efficiency.

I saw the plow pass by on a neighboring street, but it didn't come down my street. Why not?

It may be that a neighboring street happens to be a major road through the neighborhood or that operators are simply plowing the streets in the most efficient pattern and your street will be plowed soon. Occasionally, however, primary streets with high volumes of traffic will require sanding or plowing that is not needed on residential streets.

Why do you plow so far away from my mailbox?

City crews plow as close to mailboxes as possible without risking damage to the box. Many times high snow banks cause snow to fall back into the street. This snow gets compacted by postal vehicles making it difficult to clear the entire width of the road in subsequent plowing. Residents are encouraged to clear the area in front of their mailbox after every plowing.

Why does the city have calendar parking? Does it really make a difference?

Cars parked on both sides of the street along the roadway present a hazard, the plow operator has a difficult time navigating the plow equipment between vehicles during snowstorms, and also are obstructions that prevent clearing the road from curb to curb.

