



Maintenance Guidelines Winter Snow and Ice Activities

Whatcom County Public Works has established winter maintenance guidelines to place priorities for snow and ice control.

One of the county's largest budget expenditures occurs during winter maintenance activities. Every dollar spent on snow and ice is a dollar that cannot be used to maintain and preserve the existing roadway structure.

Whatcom County's winter maintenance program is structured on a priority basis of the 960 miles of roadway maintained by Whatcom County Public Works. Winter services on some roads could be significantly impacted based on the severity of the event and/or the maintenance level of the road.

How Winter Maintenance Levels are Determined

A Maintenance Level (ML) classification is assigned to each public road in the county. The road classification is determined by a combination of traffic volumes, residential and public use including school bus routes, businesses and public transportation systems. ML will be reviewed annually as the road's criteria could change which could raise or lower the level of service to the road.

The intent of the ML classification is to provide a level of service Whatcom County residents can expect throughout the winter by the type of road where they travel and reside. It is very important to note that emergencies that affect life and property in a winter storm may change these guidelines as written.

Maintenance Levels are divided into four categories:

Maintenance Level 1 Defined

Highest Priority. Roads are paved and constructed as All Weather Roads with A.D.T.'s, (Average Daily Traffic) of 100 and above. These roads may include bus routes. (See priority routes on attached map)

Plow to maintain snow accumulations less than 4". Provide sand at hills or intersections that have been identified as hazardous areas after snowfall has stopped.

Maintenance Level 2 Defined

Roads are paved. Normally, secondary roads with over 25 residences, or a road that serves a functional need for public access will fall into this level.

Plow to maintain snow accumulations less than 6". Sanding will be done only at defined locations that are on established school bus routes during ice events if schools are in operation.

Maintenance Level 3 Defined *

Roads that are low traffic volume roads including remote areas, developments, cul-de-sacs, single lane and dead end roads.

Plow ML 3 Roads after all other class of roads have been completed. Accumulations of snow can be expected to exceed 12". These roads will not be plowed on a routine schedule. Residents should plan for up to 7 days without service during extreme conditions.

<p><i>*If a ML 3 Road is utilized by a school district or WTA as a bus route recognized by Whatcom County, it would be maintained the same as a ML 2 Road on days that school is open. For all other ML 3 Roads, it will be common to accumulate snow in excess of 8" for extended time periods during storms of intense snowfall. During extreme conditions, residents should plan up to 5 days without service.</i></p>
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Sanding Operations

The application of sand will be greatly reduced on county roads. ML 1 Roads will maintain the same level of service as in prior years; ML 2 and 3 Roads will see reductions in coverage. Sanding and de-icing will be performed as resources allow.

Whatcom County may not sand snow packed roads or frost-covered roads unless listed. Sand will be applied for freezing rain and black ice events in priority order of the ML listed above.

For your safety, make sure you know what to expect and prepare for during Whatcom County winter storms.

Private Roads

Contractors that provide snow plowing for private roads are listed on Craigslist under Services and Farm and Garden.

Snow Berms and Mailboxes

Whatcom County receives numerous phone calls during snow events indicating that snow berms left by the plows do not allow access from private roads and driveways onto county roads or mailboxes. It is the policy of Whatcom County that during routine snow plowing, we simply do not have the resources to remove berms and clear driveways and mailboxes.

Winter Tips

To prepare for the winter months be sure to have your vehicles mechanically prepared. Four-wheel drive, all wheel drive or higher clearance vehicles will greatly reduce problems on secondary roads; have tire chains or traction tires readily available. Planning ahead is important! Have food, water and medical supplies in your home to last up to one week. Be aware of weather reports to plan ahead for even longer periods of time if a major storm is in the forecast.

When clearing your driveway and snow berm, please pile the snow to the left side as you face your house, especially as you get closer to the road. This will prevent the plow blade from pushing the material you just shoveled, back into your driveway again. Throwing snow onto the road also creates obstructions in the roadway and can create hazards to other motorists. Please be considerate of other motorists and pedestrians. Parking your vehicles in your driveway and off of the road also helps in the progress of the snowplow operators to complete their routes quicker and more efficiently.

More information relating to road closures and additional emergency information please go to the Whatcom County Website: www.whatcomcounty.us

If you have any comments or concerns regarding these standards, please send written correspondence to the address listed above or by e-mail.