



Snow and Ice

Frequently Asked Questions

How soon will the county plow my road?

- Each road in the county is given a priority level, 1, 2, 3, or 4. Priority 1 roads are focused on first, then priority 2, and so on. Road plowing and sanding is prioritized based on factors like how much traffic a road receives, if it is a transit or school route, if the road has emergency facilities like police and fire stations, and other similar criteria. This means that service on low-priority level 3 or 4 roads may be significantly reduced during and after severe snowfall, ice storms, and other winter weather.
- Residents are encouraged to prepare in advance for winter storms and stay home for their safety until roads are cleared and safe. The unique climate of Whatcom County can cause extreme weather in one area and relatively no impact in another. Residents should not assume the conditions at their location represent the conditions of the county as a whole.
- Special circumstances and situations may cause deviations from the listed priority levels. For example, if a road is unsafe, regardless of its priority level, it will not be plowed. If first responders or emergency workers request that a road be plowed for emergency access, maintenance crews will re-route to assist with first responders, regardless of what priority level the requested road is.

If I call multiple times, will it help me get my road plowed faster?

- No, calling multiple times will not change the priority of snow plowing or winter operations. When someone calls multiple times, our limited administrative staff must take repetitive phone calls when they could otherwise be coordinating with snow plow crews.

How does the county prioritize roads for snow plowing?

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How has COVID-19 impacted county snow and ice removal?

- The coronavirus pandemic has affected the department's winter operations by limiting our ability to hire and train new employees and for new employees to obtain the CDL licenses and training needed to drive snow and ice equipment. In addition, social distancing restricts how crews work together. Levels of service could be further restricted if employees must quarantine or isolate due to infection.

There is a tree down on my road, who do I call?

- When a tree is blocking the road, who to call depends on what type of road it is. A private road or driveway is the responsibility of the property owner. A city road is the responsibility of the city. A road in the county is the responsibility of Whatcom County Public Works.

There is a power line down/power outage, who do I call?

- Call the power company, not WCPW.



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The water/sewer line is not working/broken, who do I call?

- Call your water utility company, not WCPW.

My phone line is down, who do I contact?

- Contact your phone company, not WCPW.

I live on a private road, who will plow and sand my road?

- Whatcom County does not provide winter weather services to private roads. Contractors that provide snow plowing and other winter services for private roads are listed on contractor websites like Craigslist and Angie's List.

The snow plow left a berm in front of my driveway/mailbox, will WCPW remove the berm?

- Whatcom County receives numerous phone calls during snow events indicating that snow berms left by the plows have blocked access from private roads and driveways onto county roads or mailboxes. During routine snow plowing, the county simply does not have the resources to remove berms and clear driveways and mailboxes. This is the responsibility of the owner or his or her contractor.

How should I plow my driveway so that the county's snow plow doesn't push snow back into my driveway?

- 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 county's plow blade from pushing the material you just shoveled, back into your driveway again. Do not put snow on the road. This creates obstructions and hazards to other motorists.
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How can I be prepared when a big winter storm hits?

Every winter storm is different and comes with its own unique challenges. Be prepared, be patient, be kind to yourself and others.

For your vehicle:

- Ensure your vehicle is up to date on all routine maintenance to reduce the chance of it breaking down during a winter storm.
- Four-wheel drive, all-wheel drive, or higher clearance vehicles will generally have an easier time on secondary roads.
- Don't abandon your vehicle on county roads unless you must do so for safety reasons. Vehicles parked in the roadway can prevent plows from clearing snow and may be damaged.
- Have tire chains or traction tires readily available.
- Keep [emergency winter supplies in your vehicle](#).

For your home/driveway:

- Have food, water and medical supplies in your home to last up to seven days. [Read the winter storm preparedness guide from weather.gov](#).

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- Check weather reports frequently since forecasts can change.
- Plan ahead for even longer periods of inclement weather than is forecasted, especially for major storms.
- Park your vehicles in your driveway and off of the road. This helps snowplow operators complete their routes quickly and efficiently. Vehicles parked in the roadway can prevent plows from clearing snow.