CITY OF OTTAWA, KANSAS
PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

WINTER WEATHER PREPARATION & RESPONSE

The following information provides an overview of the City of Ottawa's approach to handling winter weather conditions. Our Public Works Department is prepared to respond around the clock, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to address ice, slush, and snow on roadways. During a winter storm, these activities take priority over all non-emergency city operations. City staff closely monitors weather forecasts to develop a plan aimed at minimizing the impact of winter storms on our community.

To prepare for winter weather, the City uses salt brine to pre-treat roads, reducing the effects of snow and ice on driving surfaces. The goal of this pre-treatment process is to improve safety for travelers on Ottawa's streets. This proactive method helps manage snow and ice more effectively.

- **WHAT IS SALT BRINE?**

  Salt brine is a solution made by mixing water with sodium chloride (rock salt) until fully saturated.

- **WHEN IS SALT BRINE APPLIED?**

  Salt brine is sprayed on roadways up to 72 hours before winter weather arrives.

- **WHAT IS PRE-TREATMENT?**

  Pre-treatment is a strategy used ahead of warmer winter storms (typically when temperatures are above 15°F) to combat snow and ice. When applied within 72 hours of an incoming storm, salt brine begins working as soon as precipitation starts, helping to slow the accumulation of snow and ice on roads.

- **WHY USE SALT BRINE?**

  Salt brine is a cost-efficient solution that reduces expenses associated with post-storm cleanup if no preventative measures were taken. Pre-treating roads during regular operating hours reduces overtime costs and ensures that streets are treated before conditions worsen. Salt brine helps prevent snow and ice from bonding to pavement, which allows roads to return to a clear state more quickly after a storm.

- **HOW IS SALT BRINE APPLIED?**

  Residents may notice Ottawa crews applying salt brine to roadways using specialized trucks. Initially, the treatment appears wet, but it dries to form white streaks or patches. This residue is normal and does not harm vehicles.

- **WHAT SHOULD DRIVERS DO WHEN FOLLOWING A SALT BRINE VEHICLE?**
  Trucks applying salt brine typically travel at speeds below 40 mph. Drivers should maintain a safe distance of at least 500 feet from these vehicles.

- **BENEFITS OF SALT BRINE USE**
  1. Anti-icing helps restore roadways to normal faster, reducing accidents and delays.
  2. Liquid ice-melt begins working immediately since salt requires moisture to activate.
  3. Brine adheres to the roadway, minimizing loss from bouncing or blowing away, unlike rock salt or sand.
  4. If a storm is delayed, the brine remains effective on the roadway until precipitation begins.
  5. Pre-treatment allows crews to treat more roadways in advance, increasing efficiency and reducing salt use, which also benefits the environment.
  6. This process maximizes city resources and provides a cost-effective solution for winter weather management.

TIPS FOR DRIVING AROUND SNOW AND ICE EQUIPMENT

- Avoid passing snowplows or brine trucks.
- Be aware of blind spots—snowplows and trucks have reduced side and rear visibility.
- Allow extra stopping distance and avoid following too closely.
- Use low-beam headlights.
- Always drive cautiously and at reduced speeds.

Stay safe and help us keep Ottawa’s streets clear and accessible during winter weather!

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SNOW REMOVAL PROCEDURES

In tandem with pre-treatment, the Public Works Department, under the direction of the Street Superintendent, manages snow removal from public access areas. Restrictive Parking Ordinances are enforced as necessary to facilitate efficient operations. For snowfalls under 2 inches, snow removal will be assessed and addressed on a case-by-case basis, considering factors such as timing, road conditions, and safety needs. Full snow removal operations will typically begin when snow accumulation reaches 2 inches, ensuring timely and effective management of winter conditions.

Snow Removal Operations

Snow clearing is performed using a fleet of truck-mounted plows and motor graders, supported by Parks personnel operating skid-steers, UTVs with seasonal attachments (e.g., brooms, plows), and self-propelled snow-blowers to clear sidewalks. The Utilities Department assists by clearing parking lots, cul-de-sacs, and other areas that require additional operators. When additional support is necessary, local contractors may be engaged to supplement city resources.

Custodial staff and employees from other departments clear sidewalks and driveways at their respective facilities, including City Hall, the Fire Department, and the Power Plant.

Operational Priorities

During snow removal, public travel and emergency access remain top priorities. Resources are allocated according to the following general priorities:

1. **Emergency routes:** (Priority 1) Ensuring clear access for emergency vehicles and essential services.
2. **Thoroughfares:** (Priority 2) Maintaining main arterial streets for public safety and traffic flow.
3. **Secondary streets and residential areas:** (Priority 3) Clearing neighborhood access routes.
4. **Sidewalks and parking areas:** Supporting pedestrian and localized vehicle access.

This well-coordinated approach ensures the City can effectively manage winter weather and maintain the safety and accessibility of Ottawa’s roadways.

CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT SNOW REMOVAL PROCEDURES

City of Ottawa, Kansas – Public Works Department

Beginning with the next snow event, the City of Ottawa will implement revised snow removal procedures to improve service levels within the Central Business District (CBD). These updates are designed to enhance mobility, visibility, and accessibility during winter weather while reducing long-term accumulation in high-traffic commercial corridors.
Because each snow event presents unique challenges—including timing, duration, and severity, these procedures serve as general guidelines. Crews will adapt operations based on real-time conditions, prioritizing safety, efficiency, and staff well-being. Storm timing, particularly whether snow falls during business hours or overnight, will significantly influence the response sequence.

1. Operational Approach:

Priority 1 – Main Street Plowing (Tecumseh to 5th Street)

- Main Street within the CBD will be included in the City's Priority 1 Emergency Snow Routes.
- Crews will plow snow to the center of the roadway (windrowing) from Tecumseh Street to 5th Street.
- Intersections will be cleared concurrently to maintain cross traffic flow.
- This phase will proceed simultaneously with other Priority 1 routes citywide.

Priority 2 – Remaining CBD Streets

- After Priority 1 routes are cleared, remaining streets within the Central Business District will be addressed using the same center windrowing method.
- Snow will be pushed to the middle of each roadway to facilitate future hauling.
- Conditions of other areas in the city may influence the pace of this phase.

Priority 3 – Hauling and Cleanup

- Once the Central Business District is fully windrowed and arterial/collector routes are stabilized, crews will begin hauling snow out of the CBD.
- This typically occurs overnight to minimize disruption to businesses and pedestrian activity.
- Parking restrictions and temporary closures may be enforced to ensure efficient operations.

2. Additional Notes:

- **Snowfalls Less Than 2 Inches**
  For accumulations under 2 inches, snow removal within the CBD will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Operations will depend on timing, temperature, pedestrian conditions, and forecasted accumulation.
- **Crew Coordination and Equipment Support**
  Streets staff will work in tandem with Parks and Utilities crews, using loaders, plows, skid steers, and snow blowers to address intersections, sidewalks, and high-priority access points.
- **Public Notifications**
  Advanced notice of parking restrictions and overnight hauling will be shared with the public through established communication channels.

DE-ICING / SALTING OPERATIONS

The City deploys rock salt to prevent or break the bond of snow and ice on pavement after plowing. Salting operations follow the same priority sequence as Snow Removal with one exception noted below. Operations are directed by the Street Superintendent and adjusted to storm timing, pavement temperatures, and safety needs.

Priority Application

- **Priority 1 – Emergency Routes:** Salt travel lanes, bridge decks/overpasses, and approaches to controlled intersections as needed to maintain safe, passable conditions.
- **Priority 2 – Thoroughfares:** Salt travel lanes and high-volume intersections, turn lanes, and approaches to schools and public facilities as needed.
- **Priority 3 – Residential/Secondary Streets (Exception): No route salting.** Treat **only controlled intersections** (signalized, stop-controlled, or yield-controlled). Additional spot-treatments may be authorized by the Street Superintendent for documented hazardous locations.

When We Salt

- Freezing rain/icing events, refreeze after plowing, or compacted snow that creates slick conditions.
- Bridges, overpasses, shaded segments, and curves receive special attention.
- Below ~15°F, salt effectiveness declines; crews may adjust materials/techniques (e.g., abrasives) and coordinate with pre-treatment already described in this plan.

Notes

- De-icing is coordinated with pre-treatment and plowing to optimize material use, response time, and roadway safety.