

**TOWN OF EASTON  
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS  
SNOW & ICE POLICY**

**INTRODUCTION**

This Snow & Ice Policy is established by the Town of Easton Department of Public Works (DPW) to provide a clear and uniform understanding of the priorities and operational procedures for winter snow and ice removal. The primary objective of the DPW is to remove snow and ice from the public roadways as safely, efficiently and cost effectively as possible to keep roadways safe and passable.

The DPW is responsible for snow and ice removal for approximately 260 lane miles of public roadways, 25 miles of sidewalks, and all municipal and school parking lots. Route 138 and Belmont Street are not maintained by the Town of Easton as they are under the jurisdiction of, and maintained by, the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT).

Many factors determine the Town's response to a snow or ice event including the forecast, timing, intensity and duration of the storm, along with the air and pavement temperatures before, during and after the storm. All of these factors determine the labor, equipment, and materials required to effectively manage the snow and ice removal for each storm.

**SNOW AND ICE REMOVAL PROCEDURES**

The Easton DPW is comprised of the Highway Division, Building and Grounds Division, and Water Division. While all divisions actively participate in moderate to major snow and ice events, the Highway Division has principal responsibility for snow and ice removal including the application of anti-icing and/or deicing materials. The DPW has the capability to put approximately 25 pieces of Town owned equipment on the road during a storm event. In addition, the Town contracts with between 30 and 50 privately owned and operated pieces of equipment during most plowing events. Contractor equipment works under the direction of the DPW and follows the same policy and procedures as Town owned equipment.

**ANTI-ICING/DEICING**

The Department of Public Works utilizes sodium chloride (granular road salt) treated with corrosion inhibited magnesium chloride (liquid) for anti-icing and deicing operations. Magnesium chloride is used to pre-wet the sodium chloride as it is applied to increase adherence to the road and increase its effectiveness in preventing ice bonds. Magnesium chloride increases the effectiveness of sodium chloride at lower temperatures.

Road salt is applied to create a brine solution that prevents accumulating snowfall and precipitation from freezing and bonding to the pavement. Applying chemicals to prevent snow and ice from bonding to the pavement is known as anti-icing and is a critical part of our snow and ice control strategy. The amount of material and effort needed to break up and remove the hard pack snow and ice after it has bonded to the pavement is significantly greater than the material and effort used to prevent it from bonding to the pavement.

When chemicals are applied in anticipation of the storm, this is known as pre-treating. The goal of the DPW is to apply chemicals to all road surfaces prior to the start of forecasted precipitation to help prevent it from bonding to the pavement, but not too early as to allow the material applied to be swept from the road surface by vehicular traffic.

## **STORM EVENTS**

The DPW's snow and ice operations procedures consist of three phases:

### **1. Before the Storm (Notification and Anti-Icing):**

The Department of Public Works monitors weather conditions through a variety of sources including subscription weather services and mainstream media. DPW crews are mobilized when:

- The DPW Director, DPW Operations Manager, or Highway Supervisor directs them, based on forecasted imminent storm arrival.
- The Police Department notifies the DPW of hazardous road conditions, specifying the location(s) of the hazardous conditions. The Police Department is primarily responsible for notifying the DPW of hazardous conditions resulting from un-forecasted events that develop outside of the DPW's working hours.

For certain forecasted events, depending on temperature, forecasted accumulation, and timing, the DPW will begin anti-icing operations and pre-treat the roads before the storm begins. Pre-treating may begin up to two hours prior to the forecasted arrival of precipitation.

### **2. During the Storm (Plowing Operations)**

When approximately two inches of snow has accumulated and more is expected, the DPW moves into snow plowing operations. During plowing operations, available Town and contractor equipment is dispatched to one of the eighteen (18) plow routes throughout Town.

Main roads (arterial and major collectors) are the priority within each plow route followed by secondary roads (minor collectors), residential roads, and private ways. Depending on the rate of accumulation, main roads will remain the priority for all crews. During the storm, DPW crews will work "around-the-clock" if necessary to keep roads open and passable. During most storm events plows will make multiple passes on all streets for the duration of the storm.

When the storm abates crews will begin to "push back" or "widen out" all roads by pushing the accumulated snow back to the curb line and clearing intersections. During this phase crews also will begin clearing all municipal and school parking lots.

### **3. After the Storm (De-icing & Clean up)**

Once the snowfall has stopped and roads are cleared of snow, post-storm salting commences if necessary, based on weather conditions to help prevent refreezing. Plows will continue pushing back the amassed snow at corners and intersections, to provide improved visibility. In the days following a storm event, if deemed necessary, plows will

push snow banks further back along roadways during working hours as manpower and equipment are available.

## **SIDEWALKS**

After the majority of streets have been cleared and pushed back, sidewalk clearing will commence on approximately 25 miles of sidewalks. Due to limited resources not all sidewalks will be cleared. Only those sidewalks deemed a high priority due to their proximity to schools, businesses, and along main roads will be cleared.

Clearing sidewalks is a difficult and time consuming task due to the limited pieces of equipment capable of clearing sidewalks, limited sidewalk widths, obstructions such as fire hydrants, signs, and mailboxes, and continued cleanup of intersections and driveways which can cause sidewalks to become obstructed after they have been cleared. When accumulations are relatively small sidewalks will be cleared with v-plow attachments which allow for greater production rates. When accumulations of snow and/or the size of snow banks make use of the v-plows ineffective snow blower attachments will be used to clear sidewalks. Use of snow blower attachments greatly reduces the rate of production compared to v-plows.

## **PARKING**

On-street overnight parking is prohibited in the Town of Easton between the hours of 1:00 AM and 8:00 AM during the months of December, January, February, and March. In addition, parking is not allowed during snow and ice operations regardless of the time of day. Vehicles impeding the removal of snow and ice are subject to towing per the Town of Easton Code.

## **PRIVATE WAYS**

Private ways which are opened to the public are eligible to be plowed by the Town of Easton per M.G.L. Chapter 40 Section 6C. Private ways which are not open to public travel are not eligible for plowing. In addition, certain private ways that have been approved with specific conditions stating that the Town will not be responsible for snow and ice removal and/or maintenance of those ways shall not be eligible for plowing. The Town of Easton DPW reserves the right to discontinue the plowing of private way if the condition (width, surface, slope, vegetation, fences, mailboxes, stonewalls, rocks, etc.) of a way poses a risk to the operator or equipment, or if information is found showing that the way is no longer eligible under this policy.

## **PLOW DAMAGE**

Personal property such as portable basketball hoops, fences, or landscaping that are placed in the public right-of-way are put there at the owner's risk. The Town of Easton does not assume responsibility for damage to such items as a result of snow plowing operations.

If you believe that your property, not located within the public right-of-way, has been damaged by Town equipment or Town of Easton hired equipment you must contact the DPW immediately so that we may investigate the claim and if warranted make the repair. The Town of Easton will not reimburse for damages unless the DPW has provided pre-approval for the repairs to be made.

## **MAILBOXES**

During snowplowing operations, some mailboxes in the road layout may be damaged. Most of the damage is caused by the weight of the snow coming off the plow. The Town is not responsible for damage to mailboxes resulting from contact with snow. While it is uncommon for a plow to physically strike a mailbox, it does happen occasionally. If a mailbox is physically struck by a plow the DPW will replace the mailbox with a standard box and post. The Town is not responsible for the additional costs of decorative or designer mailboxes and posts.

## **PRIVATE DRIVEWAYS**

The Town's snow & ice operations personnel (while on Town time) and equipment are prohibited from salting, plowing or otherwise clearing private property including private driveways, walks, etc.

## **SCHOOL**

The decision on whether to delay or cancel school based on weather conditions is made by the Superintendent of Schools. The Department of Public Works makes every effort to have roads, sidewalks, and parking lots cleared in time for the school day, however the timing and intensity of the storm is often the primary factor on whether or not school will be delayed or cancelled. The DPW is responsible for the roads and sidewalks into the schools as well as the parking lots. School personnel are responsible for clearing the internal sidewalks and walkways on school property

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RESIDENTS**

### **DRIVEWAYS**

The number one complaint from homeowners is that a plow just filled the end of their already cleared driveway with snow again. Unfortunately, pushing snow to the side of the road and creating a windrow or snow bank along driveways is unavoidable during plowing operations. Residents should be aware that during plowing operations the plows will make multiple passes along a road to keep the road open, and that when the storm subsides crews will continue to plow until the road has been pushed back or widened out. Often times this means that snow will be re-deposited in driveway openings that have already been cleared, and we recognize this is discouraging and irritating. However, to minimize this inconvenience we recommend that you wait as long as possible to clear the end of your driveway, and when shoveling out the mouth of your driveway place snow towards the downstream side (direction the plow will be traveling) to help keep larger amounts of snow from being re-deposited back into the driveway.

### **RUBBISH PICKUP**

During the winter months when there are snow banks along the roads, trash pick-up becomes more difficult. Please do not place trash bags, barrels or recycling bins on top of high snow banks. They should be placed on the street at the foot of the snow banks or at the end of driveways. Residents should always be aware of storm conditions. If street plowing operations are underway, try to avoid placing trash bags, barrels and bins in the path of plows. In some cases trash and recycling may be delayed. Residents participating in the Town trash program should check the Town website or social media for any updates on possible delays associated with winter storms.

## **BE PATIENT**

Please remember, whether it is your driveway for which you are responsible or the 260 lane miles that the Town is responsible for; snow removal is an arduous and time consuming job. DPW crews work long hours under harsh conditions.

## **MISCELLANEOUS**

- When possible, stay off the roads. Plows can operate much more effectively when traffic is light.
- Motorists should give plows plenty of room. Please do not tailgate or follow plows too closely. Always be aware that plows frequently need to back up during normal plowing operations especially while clearing intersections. When approaching a plow traveling in the opposite direction please drive as close to the right side as possible. Plows need to move material from the center of the road and plows can be also be “pushed” into the center of the road by hard packed snow and ice that catches the plow blade. Always yield as much room to plows as possible.
- Residents should shovel out the fire hydrant nearest their house for their personal safety, and should keep nearby catch basins clear of snow and ice to prevent street flooding during heavy rains or snow melting periods.
- Children should not be permitted to play in snow banks at or near the edge of the road.

## **BYLAWS & RESTRICTIONS**

### **Winter Parking Ban**

The Town’s annual on-street winter parking ban commences December 1<sup>st</sup> and continues through March 31<sup>st</sup>. During this time there is no parking allowed on any street in Easton between the hours of 1:00 AM and 8:00 AM. The Easton Police Department is responsible for enforcement of the parking ban. Per §202-37 of the Town of Easton Bylaws, the Department of Public Works may remove, or cause to be removed, any vehicle interfering with the plowing or removal of snow and ice, from any public street or public place.

### **Depositing snow or other debris into public ways (Easton Bylaw §202-38)**

No person shall pipe or otherwise deposit in or upon any public street or public place, any water or other substance that may freeze and thereby create a hazardous condition. This includes, shoveling, plowing or blowing snow into or across any public road. The Easton Police Department is authorized to enforce this bylaw and may issue fines of up to \$300 for each incident.

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

### **My Street hasn’t been plowed yet. Why?**

We wish we had enough manpower and equipment to plow every street immediately, but our resources are limited and so we must adhere to a carefully laid out system of routes for clearing the streets. To keep our snow removal operations as effective and efficient as possible, plows are not permitted to deviate from their assigned routes. If we allowed our plows to be diverted each time a special request was made, our system would not work and it would take far longer to get

all the streets in the Town cleared. Main Roads have first priority for snow plowing followed by secondary roads, residential roads, and private ways. The average route has 50 streets and 14 lane miles of roads to clear.

**The plow left some snow at the end of my driveway. Can you send someone to come and plow it out?**

No. There are approximately 6,000 driveways in the Town of Easton and it is not feasible for DPW crews to clear the ends of driveways.

**Can you tell me exactly when my street will be plowed?**

Under ideal circumstances, we can predict fairly accurately when we will have streets in various sections of the Town plowed. As weather conditions change we often must alter our snow-fighting strategy in the midst of the snow removal operations in order to control drifting snow, ice or other special problems. We cannot give you an estimate of when your street will be cleared due to ever-changing weather conditions.

**I just saw a plow truck riding with the plow up. Why?**

There are a few reasons for this. Each snowplow has an assigned route. Plowing along the way to the assigned route would delay the response time to that route. In addition, at various times chemicals are applied to the roads and plowing is temporarily suspended on those roads so that the chemicals are not plowed off before they can begin working. Finally, vehicles may be returning to the DPW because of mechanical or other issues that require attention.

**I see plow trucks scraping bare pavement. Isn't this a waste of money?**

During the cleanup and push back phases of storm cleanup it is common for trucks to be scraping bare pavement in the travel lanes while plow blades are pushing back snow piles on the sides of the road. Widening out roads is a critical part of the overall snow and ice control plan so that as much of the pavement surface is clear and roadside drainage structures are open.

**I'm having a party tonight. Can you be sure to plow in front of my house before my guests start arriving?**

We wish we could comply with all requests, but equipment and manpower limitations do not permit us to deviate from our predetermined snow plowing system.

**I once saw a snow plow parked in a restaurant parking lot during a bad snowstorm. Why was it there instead of on the streets working?**

Snow plow operators take pride in clearing the streets on their routes as quickly and thoroughly as possible. Driving a snowplow is demanding, tiring work. Common sense and good safety practices dictate that each driver should take periodic breaks especially during long duration events. It is dangerous, both for the snowplow driver and the public, if a fatigued driver is behind the wheel of a snowplow. It is in the best interest of the all concerned for the drivers to take occasional breaks. The DPW monitors the status of all drivers including the duration of plowing and break periods.

**Does the Town provide sand or salt to residents?**

As a courtesy to residents the DPW makes available a sand/salt mixture in a self-service box located at the DPW facility at 130 Center Street. This box is for residents only and is for the filling of 5 gallon buckets or other similar containers. The sand/salt mixture is periodically refilled during the winter season. Filling of pickup trucks, use on commercial properties, or use by private contractors is prohibited. The sand/salt box is located at the north end of the parking lot outside of the fenced area. For safety reasons, only authorized personnel are permitted to enter the fenced area of the DPW yard. If you have questions, or if the box needs to be refilled please enter the DPW building via the front door or call (508) 230-0800 during normal business hours.

**I have a medical condition. Can you plow my street in case there is an emergency and an ambulance needs to get through?**

The POTENTIAL for a medical emergency does not warrant priority treatment. Anyone needing an ambulance in a medical emergency should call 911. Police and Fire Dispatch will coordinate directly with DPW as needed to ensure that emergency vehicles can access all properties as needed.

Policy Adopted: 11/4/2013

Policy Amended: 9/22/2015