

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

It snowed last night, when will my road be plowed?

Snow removal is performed based upon a priority system explained in greater detail in this brochure. When your road will be cleared depends on a number of factors, including the type of road you use or reside on.

My mailbox was knocked over by a snow plow. Who is responsible for replacing it?

WCRC's policy is to replace mailboxes that have been hit by a snow plow. However, WCRC will not repair or replace a mailbox if it was broken by the sheer force of the snow coming off the plow blade. Please call our office and we will investigate the problem. Upon verification that the mailbox was hit by our equipment, the mailbox and support will be replaced by crews. If the ground is frozen, a temporary mailbox and support structure can be provided until seasonal conditions allow for final installation.

Why do snow plows block my driveway with snow when they clear the road?

WCRC's first priority is the safety of the traveling public and clearing the roads of snow and ice by pushing it off the road and shoulders is necessary. Sometimes this means that snow is pushed into driveways. While plow crews try to minimize the amount of snow that gets plowed into driveways during a storm, it is the responsibility of the property owner to clear their driveway opening.

We understand the frustration that this causes area residents. To minimize extra work, we recommend that you shovel to the right side of your driveway as you face the road.

Shoveling an area large enough to hold the snow coming off a plow blade may help reduce the need for a "second shovel."



Credit: County Road Association of Michigan, 2014.

Why can't salt be put on roads before it snows?

Putting salt on road surfaces prior to a snowfall wastes time and money since salt often bounces from the dry road during application. The portion that manages to land in the right location is subject to wind and traffic which blows the salt off the road before it can do its job.

WCRC Mission Statement

The Washtenaw County Road Commission is responsible for maintaining a road system that is reasonable safe and convenient for the traveling public.



Winter Road Maintenance

- About Winter Maintenance
- WCRC's Plowing Priorities
- Winter Driving Tips
- Frequently Asked Questions

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Questions or Comments?

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For Winter Maintenance Updates:

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Winter Maintenance Priorities

The Washtenaw County Road Commission (WCRC) is responsible for winter maintenance on 1,649 miles of county roads and 581 lane miles of state highways and expressways. With few exceptions, WCRC conducts winter maintenance on public roads located outside of cities and village limits. Cities and villages provide winter maintenance with their own workforces.

WCRC performs winter maintenance activities in accordance a priority system based on traffic volumes, location and road classification (paved, unpaved). WCRC's winter maintenance priorities are as follows:

1 Paved County Roads & Select Highways
I-94, US-23, M-14, US-12 between I-94 & M-52
Goal: Road is generally bare of snow and ice across the entire width of the road. Clearing the pavement will be a continuous process during and after a snow event.

2 M-52, M-153, M-17, & US-12 between I-94 and Wayne County
Goal: Road is generally bare of ice and snow in the center portion of the road with enough width for a one-wheel track in each direction. Clearing the pavement bare of snow and ice over its entire width will be accomplished as soon as reasonably possible.

3 Subdivision Roads
Goal: Road is one plow truck pass wide in each direction of travel after the completion of Priority 1 and initial goal of Priority 2. Clearing entire width of the road will be accomplished as soon as reasonably possible without requiring overtime work.

4 Gravel Roads
Goal: Road is one plow truck pass wide in each direction of travel after the completion of Priority 1 and initial goal of Priority 2. Clearing entire width of the road will be accomplished as soon as reasonably possible without requiring overtime work.



SAFETY FIRST

Exercise extreme caution during inclement weather. Carefully monitor weather advisories, give fellow drivers extra room, and slow down.

- Be extra cautious on bridges; they can be icy when roads are dry.
- Accelerate and brake slowly. Avoid abrupt steering maneuvers especially when changing lanes.
- Don't use cruise control when roads are icy.

WATCH THE SLUSH

Look at the slush being thrown by passing vehicles. If slush is thrown to the side of the wheels and splashing, the salt is still working. If the slush begins to stiffen and is thrown directly behind the wheels, the salt is losing effectiveness and icy conditions may develop.

RUSH HOUR STORMS

The storms likely to cause the most inconvenience for drivers are those that strike just before or during the morning or afternoon weekday rush hours. During rush hour storms, WCRC snowplow drivers encounter the same traffic and conditions as other motorists as they attempt to plow or de-ice the roads. Increased traffic volumes can significantly slow road clearing efforts.

DON'T CROWD THE PLOW!

WCRC drivers are specially trained to drive salt trucks and snowplows, but drivers need your help when it comes to maneuvering their large trucks along roadways or through traffic. Please give plow drivers plenty of room to do their job. Snow and ice discharging from these plows is intense. For the safety of all, avoid passing a snowplow.

WINTER MAINTENANCE FACTS

- WCRC has a fleet of forty-six snowplows, ready twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week during the winter.
- WCRC employs over 60 certified, professional snowplow drivers and heavy equipment operators to help keep public roads clear during the winter.
- During a typical year, WCRC will provide between 50 to 75 days of winter maintenance services. The 2013/14 winter season required 103 days!
- As temperatures fall to 10-20 degrees, the action of salt (which lowers the freezing temperature of water) takes longer to work. Sand is used on unpaved roads and sometimes on paved roads during extremely cold temperatures when salt is less effective. Sand may provide better traction, but it does not melt snow and ice.

WINTER MAINTENANCE COSTS

- WCRC typically spends \$2-3 million annually on winter maintenance, including nearly \$1 million on salt alone.
- A county-wide, full crew deployment for winter maintenance costs approximately \$8,500 per hour.
- A heavy snowstorm can cost more than \$400,000 to clear, including the costs of salt, sand, vehicle operation and maintenance, wages and overtime. The same storm can require three days of clean up to clear all roads.
- Due to a steady decline in transportation revenues, along with rapidly rising costs WCRC has made difficult but responsible changes to winter service levels.