

TOWN OF OTIS

Highway Department

Winter Snow and Ice Operations

The intent of this guide is to advise the Town of Otis residents and visitors of our Highway Department's winter snowplowing and anti-icing / de-icing goals and objectives. We would like to facilitate your understanding and to obtain your assistance so the roads in Otis can be restored to "passable conditions" as promptly and efficiently as possible after a storm. Your cooperation and understanding are essential for the Highway Department to achieve this objective. Please have patience. Each winter storm has unique characteristics that influence the methods that we use to combat the resulting snow and/ or ice related conditions. The timing of a storm can also influence the removal of snow and ice. The Highway Department endeavors to maintain adequate traction for pedestrians and vehicles properly equipped for winter driving conditions. This does not mean bare, dry pavement should be expected after each snowfall or ice storm. Furthermore, this does not mean the streets will be free of snow and ice.

Snow plowing is a time consuming and arduous job. The Highway Department plows approximately 41 miles of roads; the Maintenance Department plows the Fire, Police departments, Transfer Station and other Town buildings and parking lots, etc. With your assistance and patience, we will be able to get roads open, keep traffic flowing, and restore roads to safe travelling conditions quickly. Some residents will have their road plowed first and some will be last, but all Town owned roads will be cleared. We thank you in advance for your cooperation.

The following is a general description of the Highway Departments snow and ice policy. You must also be aware that each storm is different, but we try to follow our snow and ice operations policy as closely as possible.

Our snow and ice program entails five steps:

1. Anti-icing operation
2. Plowing operation
3. De-icing operation
4. Abrasives operation
5. Cleanup\ winging back

Anti-icing Operation

As the snow or ice storm begins, the Highway Department initiates its anti-icing operations by spreading salt or sand salt mixture when necessary. This serves two main purposes: it prevents the snow and ice from bonding and compacting to the pavement and it keeps traffic moving. When fully operational, 3 anti-icing/ de-icing material spreader trucks are used for this operation.

Plowing Operation

Plowing operations begins when 1" to 2" of snow accumulates on the ground. The Highway Department has 6 pieces of equipment equipped to plow snow. The main objective during the snow storm is to keep roads passable. At the end of the storm, the plows begin to push back the amassed snow to the edge of the road. *Residents may want to wait until the roads have been plowed clear before clearing the entrance of their driveways.* If snow banks need to be pushed back further because of heavy build-up on the roadside, we will attempt to do so following the storm given the availability of manpower and equipment. Please remember it takes 4 to 6 hours after it stops precipitation to clear the roads and longer with heavier storms.

No person other than an employee in the service of the Highway Department or any employee in the service of a contractor working for the Highway Department shall pile, push, or plow snow or ice onto a Town owned way so as to impede the flow of traffic or cause hazard on any such way.

The Highway Department staff are well trained and dedicated to plow "around the clock", if necessary, keeping the roads open and passable. Residents should not be alarmed if they do not see their road plowed during the early part of a snow storm. **The Highway Department follows an assigned route plan.** Again, please be patient, all Town-owned roads will be eventually plowed.

De-icing Operation

Once the snowfall or ice storm has stopped and all roads are clear of snow, post storm de-icing operation commences. All roads are treated with salt when necessary to improve traction and melt remaining snow and ice.

Abrasive operations

Abrasive operations will take place on gravel roads after the roads have been cleared of snow and ice at a rate to provide traction for vehicles properly equipped for winter driving. Abrasives will be applied in the form of sand, stone chips, or 3/8" trap rock or mixture of all three. All materials will be spread at a speed less than 28 mph.

Clean up / Winging Back

Once all plowing and de-icing operations have been completed, clean up (slushing off roads) winging back, widening roads (benching snow banks to make room for snow, pushing back intersections) in the day(s) following the storm, given the availability of manpower and equipment.

Mail box policy

Another area of concern to residents is mailboxes, paper boxes, lawns, fences, shrubs, bushes, signs, etc. We do not "deliberately" knock over or damage mailboxes, etc. It is the heavy snow coming off the plow that hits these objects. Remember anything installed within the Towns right-of-way (i.e., lawns, fence, mailbox, stonewall, shrubs, ect.) is placed there at the owner's risk. Hence residents are encouraged to place these items at the maximum allowable distance from the road. Please beware that the Town of Otis does not reimburse for these damages during snow and ice operations.

Winter Parking Ban

Every October the Board of Selectmen will declare the winter parking ban, through blackboard connect and post in public places.

Inclement Weather Parking Ban

The Board of Selectmen, or its designees, may declare a winter parking ban on all, or any, ways within the Town during the period beginning November 1 through April 30 for the purposes of snow and ice removal during periods of inclement weather.

No motor vehicle shall be parked on any way within the Town during the Inclement Weather Winter Parking Ban.

Motor Vehicle Removal: During periods of inclement weather the Chief of Police and/or the Highway Superintendent or their designee may remove or cause to be removed any motor vehicle parked in violation of the Inclement Weather Winter Parking Ban. Vehicle removals will be performed via local towing companies. The Otis Police Department shall be notified of all removals.

Owner Responsible for Charges: The owner or operator of a motor vehicle which is removed pursuant to this by-law shall be fully responsible for all charges and expenses incurred for removal and storage of such motor vehicle

Road Closures

Every October have the Board of Selectmen, declare the winter road closures of no winter maintaince from Nov 1 through April 30, through blackboard connect and posting in public places.

These following Town owned roads are closed with no winter maintaince from Nov 1 through April 30 each year.

Roads closed are:

Becket Rd. from # 981 Jakubiec residences to the Becket towline.

Lee Westfield Rd from #1158 Williams Stone Company to Becket rd

Marcy Rd. from #72 Gadaire residences to the end.

Merritt Rd. from Marcy Rd. to Becket Rd.

Residents Can Help

Residents can assist the Highway Department during a snow or ice storm by heeding these suggestions:

1. Observe all winter parking bans.
2. Reduce your speed and drive cautiously.
3. Remain off the roads during storm events unless absolutely necessary.
4. Do not allow children to make snow forts at the edge of roads or play in road.
5. Do not plow, blow, or throw snow into the road!
6. Before final clean up of your driveway check the road. If it does not appear to be widened out, a plow will most likely be returning to plow again, and snow may be pushed back into the entrance of your driveway. Doing this might keep you from clearing your driveway more than once.
7. Keep snowmobiles and off road vehicles off Town roads. It packs snow and ice to the road making it more difficult to remove.

Winter Storm Emergency Numbers

Highway Department: 1-413-269-0106 leave message

After Hours Roadway Emergency: 1-413-442-0512

Please be advised that Rte. 23 east and west (East Otis Rd. & Monterey RD.) Rte. 8 north and south (North Main rd. & South Main Rd.) are maintained by MA DOT

MA DOT Lenox: 1-413-637-5700

Winter Sand

Winter sand is available for residential use at the Highway Garage at 417 North Main Rd. (no contractors)

Frequently Asked Questions

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

Plow crews plow snow equally to both sides of the road during the storm; it is the responsibility of the property owner to clear their driveway opening. Also as long as there is snow in the roads we will continue to plow. To avoid double work try to clear snow from your driveway after the plow has been by, place it on the right side of your driveway as you face the road instead of the left.

- Why it is sometimes snowplows are seen driving with their plows in the raise position? Why are they not plowing?

There are several reasons plows are not pushing snow. Plows may be in operation to spread material or may be out of materials to spread and headed back for a refill. Another possibility is the Town is not responsible for the road the plow is currently on and headed elsewhere.

- When does salt fail to melt snow?

Salt is effective at treating snow/ice at temperatures of 15 degrees or warmer. Once the temperature drops below 15 degrees, it becomes less effective. Why does this happen?

First, there has to be water in a liquid form for the salt to have any effect at all. That is why you usually see trucks spreading salt in a brine form on roadways. When temperatures are colder than 15 degrees, almost all water freezes, including what is put down by snowplows. Therefore, the salt has very little effectiveness at this point.

- Who determines when the snowplows are called out?

Under our policy the Highway Superintendent or his/her designee calls in staff for the snow and ice operations.

Have you ever wondered what makes a storm a blizzard? Below you will find definitions of weather related terms. Definitions provided by the National Weather Service.

Blizzard - A blizzard means that the following conditions are expected to prevail for a period of 3 hours or longer: Sustained wind or frequent gusts to 35 miles an hour or greater and considerable falling and/or blowing snow (i.e., reducing the visibility frequently

Heavy Snow - This generally means... snowfall accumulating to 4" or more in depth in 12 hours or less or snowfall accumulating to 6" or more in depth in 24 hours or less. In forecasts, snowfall amounts are expressed as a range of values, i.e., "8 to 12 inches." However, in heavy snow situations where there is considerable uncertainty concerning the range of values, more appropriate phrases are used, such as "...up to 12 inches..." or alternatively "...8 inches or more..."

Ice Storm - An ice storm is used to describe occasions when damaging accumulations of ice are expected during freezing rain situations. Significant accumulations of ice pull down trees and utility lines resulting in loss of power and communication. These accumulations of ice make walking and driving extremely dangerous. Accumulations are called significant when they amount to a quarter inch or more.

Nor'easter - A strong low pressure system that affects the Mid Atlantic and New England States. It can form over land or over the coastal waters. These winter weather events are notorious for producing heavy snow, rain, and tremendous waves that crash onto Atlantic beaches, often causing beach erosion and structural damage. Wind gusts associated with these storms can exceed hurricane force in intensity. A nor'easter gets its name from the continuously strong northeasterly winds blowing in from the ocean ahead of the storm and over the coastal areas.

Wind Advisory - Sustained winds 25 to 39 mph and/or gusts to 57 mph. Issuance is normally site specific.

Wind Chill - Increased wind speeds accelerate heat loss from exposed skin, and the wind chill is a measure of this effect. No specific rules exist for determining when wind chill becomes dangerous. As a general rule the threshold for potentially dangerous wind chill conditions is about -20 degrees Fahrenheit.

Winter Storm Warning - This announcement is issued by the National Weather Service when a winter storm is producing or is forecast to produce heavy snow or significant ice accumulations. The criteria for this warning can vary from place to place.

Winter Storm Watch - This product is issued by the National Weather Service when there is a potential for heavy snow or significant ice accumulations, usually at least 24 to 36 hours in advance.

The Highway Department in Otis is devoted to providing residents and visitors with dependable snow and ice operation in the shortest and most efficient time possible. With your cooperation we will all benefit during a storm event. If you have any questions concerning the snow and ice operations as it is explained, please call 269-0106 Monday thru Friday 7 am- 3 pm. We will try to assist you in any way possible.