

LYON COUNTY
HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT

Snow Removal and Ice Control Policy

Adopted by the Lyon County Board of Commissioners on

November 18th, 2003

PURPOSE:

The following Policy has been established to provide guidelines for the public and for plow operators to follow in order to ensure consistent practices for snow and ice removal during winter storm events. Our goal is to have all County Roads passable within a reasonable amount of time after a snowfall has stopped. Our plowing priorities reflect a commitment to insuring that key roads are kept open to serve critical facilities and to provide access between state highways and our communities.

BACKGROUND:

Lyon County maintains approximately 500 miles of County Roads. Snow removal operations are accomplished with 15 units (10 truck mounted plows with sanders and 5 motor graders). The number and types of equipment used in snow removal operations may change over time due to budget restrictions. In order to reasonably meet the Public's expectations; the following Policy will apply.

BASIS OF POLICY:

DISPATCHING OF SNOW PLOWS – The decision to plow and/or sand will be made by the County Engineer and/or Maintenance Superintendent after consultation with area Maintenance Foremen; based on the following guidelines:

- The County will not dispatch plows until after the snowfall and/or wind has stopped; **EXCEPT:** (a) when conditions allow reasonable accomplishments to be made, or (b) in an emergency or other special circumstances.
- The County will perform snow removal when accumulations exceed two (2) inches.
- The County will perform ice control measures when icy conditions seriously affect travel.

OPERATIONS – Generally the following three phases will be used in snow removal operations:

1. Make the roads passable

Clean one lane in each direction.

2. Widen the lanes to edge of shoulders and apply abrasive/chemical mixture

The County will perform sanding operations at problem areas, including: curves, hills, intersections, and bridges. *The County does not assure a completely bare road and will not typically sand entire sections of highway.* A blend of 25% salt to sand is generally used in sanding operations; this is modified as the temperature and/or conditions warrant.

3. Clean up

Remove ice and slush off roadway after salt and sun have been allowed to work.
Remove snow from urban areas as scheduling/demands allow.

Depending upon the situation, more than one phase may be accomplished at one time.

HOURS OF OPERATION – The normal “weekday” early start time during a snow event is **5:00 a.m. within municipalities**. The County is staffed for one shift of snow and ice removal. In a snow event, the necessary County personnel will be mobilized by their respective Foreman and all necessary equipment will be on the road by 6:00 a.m. outside municipalities. Any deviation from the start time must be approved by the County Engineer and/or Maintenance Superintendent.

Weekends and holidays will receive a reduced level of service, due to lower traffic volumes and the limited resources available.

Operator duty shifts are generally limited to a maximum of 12 hours per day for safety reasons, therefore; most routes will not have coverage between 5:00 p.m. and 4:00 a.m. the next morning.

Operations will be halted when: (a) service levels are reached, (b) coverage time has elapsed, (c) conditions are too hazardous, or (d) reasonable accomplishments cannot be made.

ROAD PRIORITIES – It is the goal of the Highway Department to serve the majority of the public in the quickest way possible, with this in mind, roads with higher traffic volumes will typically receive higher priority. The following are the priorities plow operators will attempt to adhere to.

1. Major County Highways which carry heavy traffic volumes and connect cities, state highways, neighboring Counties, or are intra-County corridors. These are always paved.
2. County routes that provide rural area access to cities and state highways. These are usually paved but could be gravel.
3. Medium volume County roads that serve as mail and/or school bus routes and provide access for numerous rural residents. These are usually paved but may be gravel.
4. Low volume County roads that may serve as mail and/or school bus routes but serve few rural residents. These are usually gravel.

PERSONAL PROPERTY – Mailboxes, fences, and other items damaged during snow and ice removal are evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Only those items that were damaged by actual contact with County equipment may be repaired at the County’s expense, provided they were located and installed properly. In order for a mailbox to be repaired or fixed; it must be an approved Minnesota Department of Transportation swinging arm mailbox support. (See Mailbox Policy)

The County is not liable for damages to fences, vehicles, and/or other objects placed on County right of way.

RESIDENTIAL PLOWING – County residents are reminded that it is unlawful under Minnesota Statue 160.27, Subd. 5. to plow snow from driveways onto or across County Roads. Piles of snow left on or near the road can freeze into a solid mass creating a hazardous situation for vehicles and snowplows. Piles of snow increase the chance of drifting snow onto the roadway. Accidents and damages caused by snow piles placed in the roadway may result in liability to the property owner.

STRANDED MOTORISTS – Plow operators may assist stranded motorists by contacting local law enforcement and/or emergency personnel. Plow operators will not attempt to remove a stuck vehicle unless: (a) directed by law enforcement, (b) it poses a danger to the traveling public, or (c) it hinders snow removal operations.

EMERGENCIES – The Sheriff's Office should be contacted for all emergencies requiring plowing. Plows will not be dispatched from regular routes or called in for extra duty unless it is a Fire or Medical Emergency coordinated through the Sheriff's Office. *Icing bridges or snow drifting on roads are expected aspects of winter travel and generally are not adequate justification to dispatch plow crews.*

NO TRAVEL ADVISORY – No travel advisories issued by the State Patrol and/or Sheriff's Office apply to all County snow and ice removal crews. When a No Travel Advisory is issued, the local radio stations (FM: KKCK 99.7; AM: KMHL 1400) and Sheriff's Office will be contacted, then all plows will be pulled from their respective routes.

INFORMATION – Non-emergency questions or concerns regarding snow removal should be directed to the Lyon County Highway Department at 507.532.8213 or 507.532.8200 during normal business hours (M-F 8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.).

SUMMARY OF THE POLICY:

This Policy was developed to provide general guidelines for both County personnel and the traveling public. This policy intends to cover the majority of situations **normally** encountered in winter storm events. If certain situations arise that are not part of the above Policy, the County Engineer will deal with them on a case-by-case basis. Each decision to mobilize the snow plow crews is a judgment call based on the particular weather conditions combined with past experience along with the resources available at the time and therefore may not adhere strictly to this general policy.

Adopted by Lyon County Board of Commissioners on 11/18/03