



City of Blue Earth, Minnesota
Snowplowing and Snow Emergency Policy
ADOPTED: November 6, 2023

1. Introduction

The City of Blue Earth, Minnesota, finds that it is in the best interest of the residents of the city to assume basic responsibility for control of snow and ice on city streets. Reasonable ice and snow control is necessary for routine travel and emergency services. The city will attempt to provide such control in a safe and cost-effective manner, keeping in mind safety, budget, personnel, and environmental concerns. The city will use city employees, equipment and/or private contractors to provide this service. This policy does not relieve the operator of private vehicles, pedestrians, property owners, residents and all others that may be using public streets, of their responsibility to act in a reasonable, prudent and cautious manner, given the prevailing street conditions.

2. Emergency Snow and Ice Control Operations and Emergency Parking Regulations

The Public Works Director will decide when to begin snow or ice control operations. The criteria for that decision are:

- A. Snow accumulation of two (2) inches or more;
- B. Drifting of snow that causes problems for travel;
- C. Icy conditions which seriously affect travel; and
- D. Time of snowfall in relationship to heavy use of streets.

The Public Works Director has ultimate authority in declaring a Snow Emergency.

Snow and ice control operations are expensive and involve the use of limited personnel and equipment. Consequently, snowplowing operations will not generally be conducted for snowfall of less than two (2) inches. Snow Emergencies will be in effect from 12:00 am – 6:00 am, unless otherwise notified.

For the purpose of this section, the term “Emergency” shall mean any condition upon any public street, including the presence of snow, freezing rain, sleet, ice or other phenomenon, which condition creates or is likely to create any hazardous road condition or impedes or is likely to impede the free movement of traffic, when such conditions have been declared by the Public Works Department. Upon the existence of an emergency as defined herein, the City shall notify the radio station KBEW and request that such media cooperate with the City in giving notice of such emergency to the community. This information will also be posted on the City website, announced on MyBlueEarth, and shared on the City’s social media platforms. The emergency regulations set forth below shall become effective one (1) hour after such notice has been given by the City to such news media. If an emergency is declared

the day before for a set time the next day, the emergency will become effective as stated in the notification.

During an emergency, it is unlawful for any person, as a driver or operator of a vehicle or trailer, or as the registered owner of such vehicle or trailer, to park, stop or leave standing, or cause, allow or permit to be parked, stopped or left standing, whether knowingly or unknowingly, any such vehicle upon any City Street until the street is plowed curb to curb.

From November 15 until April 15 off-street parking in yards and boulevards is permitted

3. How Snow will be Plowed

Snow will be plowed in a manner so as to minimize traffic obstructions. The center of the roadway will be plowed first. The snow shall then be pushed from left to right on two-way streets. The center of the road is normally plowed first. The snow shall then be pushed outward to the curb and onto the boulevard. Snow on cul-de-sacs will normally be plowed to the center in an attempt to provide the largest turning radius possible for emergency vehicle ingress and egress. If there are vehicles parked in the cul-de-sac, snow will be pushed to the boulevard between the vehicles. When a plow goes on a bridge, the driver shall slow down so snow does not go over the bridge, if possible. In times of extreme snowfall, streets will not always immediately be able to be completely cleared of snow.

4. Snow Removal

The Public Works Director will determine if and when snow will be removed from the area by truck. Such snow removal will occur in areas where there is no room on the boulevard for snow storage and in areas where accumulated piles of snow create a hazardous condition. Snow removal operations will not commence until other snowplowing operations have been completed. Snow removal operations may also be delayed depending on weather conditions, personnel and budget availability. The snow will be removed and hauled to a snow storage area. The snow storage area will be located so as to minimize environmental problems.

5. Priorities and Schedule of Streets to be Plowed

The city has classified city streets based on the street function, traffic volume and importance to the welfare of the community. Those streets classified as "Snow Plow Routes" will be plowed first. These are high volume routes, which connect major sections of the city and provide access for emergency fire, police, and medical services. The second priority streets are those streets providing access to schools and commercial businesses. The third priority streets are low volume residential streets.

During significant and severe storms, the city must be prepared to move personnel and equipment to maintain priority routes first. In fulfilling the need to have all priority streets safe and passable, when resources are limited, plowing of all other streets may be stopped at any time so resources can be shifted to priority routes.

Unforeseeable circumstances may cause delays in completing assigned plow routes. Such circumstances may include weather conditions that endanger the safety of snowplow operators and/or safe and effective operation of equipment, commuter traffic, disabled vehicles, poor visibility conditions, parked cars along streets, assistance to emergency response vehicles, equipment breakdown, and personnel shortages.

6. Work Schedule for Snowplow Operators

Snowplow operators will be expected to work their assigned shifts. In severe snow emergencies, operators sometimes have to work longer shifts, but will be paid overtime for hours in excess of 40 per week, or pursuant to any collective bargaining contract language. However, because of budget and safety concerns, no operator shall work more than a sixteen-hour shift in any twenty-four-hour period. While work breaks are not guaranteed, generally operators will take breaks in accordance with city policy, provided the breaks do not interfere with city services or operations. In addition, operators will be allowed sufficient time to eat a meal during any shift which is eight or more hours, or as provided in the collective bargaining agreement.

Designated Emergency Routes:

- West 1st Street from Main to County Road 16/Leland Parkway
- 7th Street from East Street to Nicollet Street
- East 10th Street from Galbraith to Main Street
- West 10th Street from Main to Holland Street
- Galbraith Street from 7th Street to 14th Street
- 14th Street from Hwy 169 to River Road / Valley Highland
- South Rice Street from 7th to 17th Street
- South Ramsey Street from 7th Street to 21st Street
- Main Street from Fairground Road to 14th Street
- Nicollet Street from 1st Street to 10th Street

7. Traffic Regulations

The city recognizes that snowplow operators are exempt from traffic regulations set forth in Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 169 while actually engaged in work on streets, except for regulations related to driving while impaired and the safety of school children. Pursuant to this authority, snowplow operators engaged in snow removal or ice control on city streets have discretion to disregard traffic laws set forth in Chapter 169, except for laws relating to impaired driving and school children safety, when in their judgment, it is safe to disregard such laws. The privileges granted herein to operators of snow removal and ice control vehicles shall apply only if the vehicle is equipped with one lighted lamp displaying a flashing, oscillating, or rotating amber light placed in such a position on the vehicle as to be visible throughout an arc of 360 degrees.

8. Weather Conditions

Snow and ice control operations will be conducted only when weather conditions do not endanger the safety of snowplow operators and equipment. Factors that may delay snow and ice control operations include: severe cold, significant winds, and limited visibility.

9. Use of Sand, Salt, and Other Chemicals

The city will use sand, salt, and other chemicals when there are hazardous ice or slippery conditions. The city is concerned about the effect of such chemicals on the environment and will limit its use for that reason.

10. Sidewalks

It is the responsibility of the resident and/or property owner to remove all accumulated snow from all sidewalks along public streets adjoining their property. This includes any snow plowed from public streets onto the sidewalk.

11. Mailboxes

Damage to a mailbox is a risk that snowplow operators face during their winter plowing requirements. The city will conduct a review of each mailbox damage claim to determine whether the city has any legal responsibility for the damage and, if so, to provide reimbursement for the mailbox. If the city, in its discretion, determines that reimbursement is appropriate, the city may provide reimbursement of \$50.00 for the mailbox and support posts that meet the city's ordinance standards, as well as state and federal requirements for mailbox size, support and placement.

12. Deviation from Policy

The Public Works Director may deviate from this policy when in his or her judgment it is in the best interest of the city or is necessary because of budget needs or other circumstances. Changes in priorities (lasting more than 4 hours) will be documented as to what caused such actions, why the change was necessary, and for how long the change is to be in effect. Those city employees and/or contractors affected will be notified immediately by radio or cell phone of such changes with all communications logged. Information logged will include the time and date of the communication, name of employee contacted, and how they were contacted. Any changes of priorities lasting more than 24 hours should be made in a written record and the public should be informed of such changes through normal methods used by the city for emergency notifications.

13. Review and Modification of Policy

City staff shall keep on file all comments and complaints received regarding this policy. The policy will be reviewed periodically. Any review will consider comments and complaints since the last review and any other factors affecting the policy or its implementation.

14. Responsibility

The Code Enforcement Department will monitor the street conditions and inform the Public Works Department of hazardous street conditions after normal work hours and will assist the Public Works Department by enforcing parking regulations during snow plowing and snow emergency periods.

15. Prohibitions

1. No person shall deposit, blow, shovel or plow snow onto or across any public street.
2. There shall be no temporary obstructions such as garbage and/or recycling receptacles, basketball poles/hoops, play equipment, landscaping items or obstacles and items of any kind placed on the road right-a-way, boulevard, alley or street in such a manner as to interfere with snowplowing operations.

16. Penalties.

1. The penalty for the first violation of the on-street snow emergency parking regulations is a written warning.

2. The penalty for the second violation of the on-street snow emergency parking ban is a \$50.00 ticket.
3. The penalty for the third and each subsequent violation of the on-street snow emergency parking ban is a \$50.00 ticket and towing the vehicle. The owner is responsible for towing costs.