

Town of Jamaica ~ Winter Operations Policy

Purpose:

The purpose of an accepted winter operations policy is to define the scope of procedures for snow and ice control and removal. The primary objective with winter operations is to maintain the safety and mobility of the traveling public. Although financial limitations ultimately affect the level of service that is provided, every effort will be made to provide safe roadway conditions as soon as possible with available resources (budget, personnel, equipment and materials). Storms vary dramatically with regards to precipitation, prediction, timing as well as elevation. The Highway Department will coordinate operations to fit each event. This plan is intended as a guide for “average” conditions.

General:

During the winter period extending from November 1 to April 30, the Highway Department’s main principal is controlling snow and ice on approx. 50 miles of road. A prioritization of roads has been established to address winter maintenance. Resource limitations do not allow for 24 hour continuous winter maintenance service during storm events. Best management practices limit employee plowing hours. There may be a reduction or absence of winter maintenance between the hours of 10:00 PM and 4:00 AM.

The Highway Department strive to keep roads safe for the traveling public, however, the Town, as well as the State of Vermont, **does not** have a “**bare roads**” policy. Roads may be snow covered during and following storm events. Adverse driving conditions are to be expected and motor vehicle operators must be prepared for such. The following is a list of actions (provided by VTrans) that drivers should adhere to in order to accommodate safe winter driving:

1. Slow down. Driving too fast on wintry roads is the leading cause of crashes.
2. Travel at a safe distance. Allow at least 3 car lengths in order to leave plenty of room to stop.
3. Watch for plow trucks. Do not crowd/tailgate slow moving maintenance and emergency vehicles.
4. Do not use cruise control on snow covered roads.
5. Four-wheel drive vehicle capabilities should not be over-estimated.
6. Clear all snow & ice from vehicle prior to travel.
7. Have proper snow tires on your vehicle.
8. Be aware of black ice on what appears to be bare pavement.

Prioritization:

During a storm event, priority will be given as follows:

1. Class 2 Town Highways (Pikes Falls Road) approx. 6.5 miles
2. Class 3 Town Highways approx. 43 miles: Roads will be addressed giving priority to paved roads and bus routes.
3. The Highway Dept. will not maintain private roads or private driveways.

4. Priority will be given to intersections, hills and curves.
5. School bus routes will be prioritized as appropriate considering status of school operation, storm duration and nature of conditions.
6. Sidewalks will be addressed as soon as practical during and following a storm event. If the sidewalk is on your property and is a priority for you, please take care of it during the storm event.

Procedure:

Using available resources and judgment based on experience, the Highway Foreman or his designated representative will determine the appropriate level and timing of snow and ice control to be performed by the Highway Department. Each storm is a unique event; therefore deviations from the routine maintenance plan may occur. Decisions must be made using individual judgment based upon a current assessment of the situation. Our Highway Crew are given the responsibility to make decisions regarding snow removal and material application to keep the roads trafficable and reasonably safe while concurrently minimizing costs.

In general, snow will be plowed and sand will be applied during a storm to keep roads open to traffic and to provide an operable roadway surface. Sand will be applied to roadway centers. Curves, hills, intersections and bus routes will be given additional attention. For continuous storms repeated application will be required.

Following storm events, continued maintenance will include improvement of road surfaces by clearing packed snow, pushing back snow on the road shoulders (winging), removing excess snow piles within the village and opening/thawing culverts, ditches and storm drains.

Equipment:

To support winter operations, the Highway Department has the following equipment available:

1. 3 Single axle, 8-yd dump trucks, each equipped with a one-way front plow, wing plow and material spreaders
2. 1 F350 Ford 1-ton truck with plow
3. 1 Kawasaki Bucket Loader
4. 1 John Deere 672 Grader
5. 1 Wacker Neuson wheeled excavator
6. 1 Bobcat S70 skid steer w/ snow blower

Materials:

The Town keeps a stockpile of sand at the Highway Garage, approximately 4,000 cubic yards, for use during the winter months. The Town, as necessary, purchases salt from the District Highway Garage on Route 30. **Residents are allowed a limited amount of sand for personal use only.**

Ordinances/Laws:

Title 19, Section 1111 of Vermont Statutes Annotated prohibits the encroachment of the Town right-of-way (ROW) without approval of the Selectboard. Objects in the ROW are placed there at the owner's risk and the Town assumes no responsibility for any damage to objects placed in violation of the statute. Common item in the ROW are fences, flower pots, basketball hoops, etc. Recovery of damages will be pursued by the Town if any of the Town's equipment is damaged due to placement of objects in the ROW. **This includes all sidewalks within the village.**

Title 19, Section 1111(b) prohibits the depositing of "material of any kind within, or to in any way obstruct a ditch, culvert or drainage course that drains a highway. "Snow is not to be pushed or placed into these areas at any time.

Title 23, Section 1126(a) of Vermont Statutes Annotated prohibits plowing or blowing snow into or across a State or Town Highway, shoulder or sidewalk. Material should not be left such that it creates an obstruction or mound. Violation of this law may result in a fine as determined by the State of Vermont (presently \$70.00).

Title 23, Section 1102 of Vermont Statutes Annotated prohibits unattended vehicles from interfering with highway maintenance. Vehicles may be towed without warning. This includes parking along all town roads and sidewalks at all times and along Rte 30 within the village between 10:00 pm and 6:00 am.

Public Communication/Information:

The Highway Department does not purposely plow snow into private driveways – it is the natural result of plowing operations. When clearing walkways/driveways, individuals should be aware of oncoming plow trucks. Do not attempt to “protect” cleared driveways/walkways by standing at the entrance. Individuals in close proximity to oncoming plow trucks may be injured by snow or debris in the snow from the plow/wing or by the plow truck itself.

The construction of snow forts, tunnels or similar structures in roadside snowbanks should be avoided.

Lawn damage within the ROW is an occurrence even though highway personnel do their best to prevent it. Excessive damage, as determined by the Highway Foreman, may be repaired in the spring or when soil conditions allow.

Conclusion:

Vermont winters provide a variety of challenges for town highway personnel, public travelers and private property owners. The adopted Winter Operations Policy should be a source of information and education for the general public. Working together, all entities involved can help to make aspects of winter maintenance easier and winter travel safer for everyone.

Adopted by the Jamaica Selectboard at their regular meeting held on November 13, 2023.