

Snow and Ice Operations

Mission Statement

When a snow or ice event occurs, it shall be the objective of the Highway Department to make sure that the streets of Georgetown are passable for vehicular traffic as soon as possible, in a safe and efficient manner. The safety of the public and the personnel shall be of the highest priority at all times.

Responsibilities

The Highway Department is responsible for removing snow from 151 public roads, 23 private roads, totaling approximately 68 miles.

Additionally, we plow Town facilities and parking lots including the Public Safety Building, Town Hall, Schools, Library, Camp Denison and Municipal Parking Lot.

Telephone List

The Police Department has cell phone number for contacting the Foreman.

Call in Procedures

During normal working hours, the observations of Highway Department, and/or the Police Department, may alert the first response for snow and ice removal. After normal business hours, the Police Department may contact a Foreman regarding street conditions. The Foreman then assesses street conditions to determine the level or response, if any, necessary.

Call in procedures will be conducted in accordance with current labor agreement guidelines and emergency provisions. All Highway employees are subject to duty during snow and ice events. When a response only requires treating the roads with materials, the Foreman will contact the appropriate number of employees directly.

In addition to Highway staff, the Town has approximately 27 contractors retained for snow removal activities, as allowed under Chapter 84, Section 5A of the Massachusetts General Laws (MGL). The retaining of private contractors for the purpose of snow and ice removal by municipalities is exempt from contract and procurement law under Chapter 30B, Section 1B(17) of the MGL. Contractors are required to provide the Town with a Certificate of Insurance, naming the Town of Georgetown as Certificate Holder and must carry at least the minimum liability coverage recommended.

Equipment

The Highway Department utilizes all the assets of the department as needed to address snow and ice emergencies. The following list represents current Highway vehicles used for snow and ice removal.

- 3 six-wheel dump trucks with sanders and plows
- 2 one-ton dump trucks with sanders and plows
- 1 pickup
- 1 front end loader to load materials

In addition to Town owned vehicles, the Highway Department has approximately 27 private contractors whom the Highway Department can utilize when conditions warrant. All contractors must attend a preseason snow meeting where they receive a short briefing and a copy of the Hired Equipment Snow Removal Policy (Attachment A). Contractors are required to provide a certificate of insurance, copy of their current registration and license and contact and cell phone information. The Highway Department inspects all private contractor vehicles to ensure that each is functioning properly and safely. Vehicles that fail inspection will not be allowed to plow.

Communications

All Highway Department vehicles are equipped with low band radios capable of transmitting and receiving on a frequency of 155.040. Each vehicle is assigned a unique call number and is capable of communicating with the base unit located at the communications center. All private contractors are required to have a working cell phone before being allowed to commence work.

Routes

The Highway Department has divided the Town into 4 sanding routes for Town owned equipment that can be augmented with private sanders as needed. There are 15 plowing routes that are assigned to both Highway Department equipment and private contractors. Routes are performed in tandem to increase efficiency of the removal process. Every contractor is supplied with a route sheet and is required to have it when reporting for duty. All Town owned equipment has a route list in each vehicle.

Snow and Sanding Operations

The following is a general description of how the Highway Department plows/sands Town roads:

1. When the snow or ice storm begins, the Highway Department responds by salting/sanding the main roads, bus routes (during school day), hills and secondary roads. Salting/sanding these roads serves three purposes; to keep traffic moving, to make sure our school buses can transport children home and to prevent the snow from bonding to the pavement, also known as snow pack. It should be noted that salt has a much slower effect on melting snow and ice at temperatures below 25 degrees, and may not be applied until it is warmer.
2. Snow plowing begins when snow is predicted to accumulate greater than three (3) inches. The Town begins by calling in its forces to begin plowing mains and secondary roads. Over 30 town and private plows can be called out, as needed, and assigned to pre-determined plow routes. The Town's policy is to plow the full width of the street, curb to curb, during each storm. On main

and secondary roads the normal procedure is to operate plow trucks in teams. Team plowing consists of two plows operating simultaneously to provide for the rapid removal of snow from centerline to curb in one pass.

3. Once snowfall has stopped and plowing is winding down, salt/sanding operations will resume. Main and secondary roads, hills, along with school bus routes are salted/sanded in an attempt to achieve bare pavement conditions. Residential streets and cul-de-sacs will be assessed to determine if salting/sanding is necessary. Sidewalks will then be plowed.

Priorities

During snow/ice conditions, calls from the Police and Fire Departments regarding accidents, medical or other emergency situations are given top priority. Upon request of the appropriate agency, the Highway Department will provide assistance as necessary. Because of the high priority assigned to snow and ice control, almost all other Highway Department operations become secondary to snow removal operations.

Streets will be plowed and sanded according to established priorities. Priorities are set based upon traffic volume, public safety, and access to emergency facilities and schools. During major storms, crews will plow and sand continuously prior to high volume traffic hours. Depending upon the type and intensity of the storm, plowing operations may be suspended during peak traffic hours to devote maximum effort to sanding operations to provide better traction. Plowing operations will resume after peak traffic hours.

- “Priority one” roads, which are the main arteries of the Town, are given first priority to maintain since they provide the interconnecting link from all corners of the Town. Priority may be extended to school bus routes in cases of early dismissal. Once completed, those bus routes will fall back to their designated priority list.
- “Priority two” roads, which are the secondary roadways that connect to main roads and major residential areas and hilled roadways, are given second priority so as to move traffic from the main streets to small residential sections.

The goal of the Highway Department is to open all streets as quickly as possible and keep them open throughout the storm. After heavy storms all roads will be pushed back to as close to the curb as possible and corners widened. Since the Town uses many classes of snow plow vehicles it is sometimes necessary to have larger equipment go back after each heavy storm to push these roads back. Residents should be aware that snow from the plows may end up in driveways. The Highway Department will not be responsible for, nor will the Highway Department or its hired contractors, come back to shovel or plow out your driveway.

Private Road Snow Removal Policy

- The travel lane for any private road shall be no less than ten (10) feet wide.
- Roadside clearance of any obstacles including vegetation shall be no less than two (2) feet either side.
- Height clearance shall be no less than fourteen (14) feet from the road.
- There must be ample room for emergency vehicles to turn around if the road is a dead end.
- Paved or unpaved private roads shall have no defects (potholes or ruts) exceeding two (2) inches in depth.
- All private ways shall have a visible street sign.
- Yearly inspections of all private roadways will be performed by this department each September. Property owners will be notified as to the repairs required to bring their roads into compliance.

The Highway Department will, upon request, re-inspect a failed road after improvements have been completed to ensure that it complies with these standards. If the road passes re-inspection, plowing and sanding services will resume.

Damage to Private Property

It should be noted that the municipality is not held responsible for damage to private property that is located within the public right of way. The right of way (ROW) is often 50' wide, and is often confused by property owners as their own property. In most cases, the ROW often extends 10 to 20 feet of either side of the paved or gravel road. Some homeowners often cultivate extensions of their lawns, place mailboxes, erect fences or stone walls in these areas, which improve the appearance of the street greatly, but are obstructive to good maintenance from being conducted on the roadway.

The snow windrow must be pushed back as far as possible for many reasons such as:

1. Traffic safety
2. Space for future snow storage
3. Prevention of melting snow water from running onto the pavement
4. To permit maximum possible view of traffic of the roads

Mailboxes located within road limits exist by sufferance only with the responsibility assumed by the owner. It is not possible for the Town to replace or repair any type of structure erected by an abutting land owner within the right-of-way that has been damaged as a result of highway maintenance or construction work. In the event of personal property damage, the Town of Georgetown will only be responsible to repair or replace damaged property having been in actual

contact with the snow removal equipment that is on private property and not within the public right-of-way.

How you can help

If you mark the front of your property with reflectors, please be sure to place them at least one foot back from the pavement. This will enable us to clear to the edge of the road without damaging your lawn.

It is essential that cars be parked well off the roadways so that the plows can open the roads as much as possible.

Reduced visibility during a snowstorm sometimes makes it impossible to see mailboxes in time to avoid hitting them. Most often, it is the heavy, wet snow rolling off the plow that damages mailboxes. This cannot be avoided. Any installation within the road layout is placed at the owner's risk. We encourage residents to set their mailbox posts at the maximum usable distance from the road edge (two foot minimum is recommended).

During the storm:

Please drive slowly. Excessive speed is the number one cause of winter accidents. On many occasions, people have tried to pass a plow or sander. Inexperienced motorists often do not realize that four-wheel drive does not make a vehicle stop faster. This can create a dangerous situation for themselves, as well as other drivers. Please give snow removal vehicles the right of way, and stay at least 100 feet back from sanders. Not only will this give you a safer surface to drive on, it will also prevent your vehicle from being sandblasted. Please do not drive in winter storms unless it is absolutely necessary.

After the storm:

Before your final driveway cleanup, please check the street. If it is clean and opened up to its full width, then you are safe. If not, please be aware that the plow truck will be back and snow may end up in your driveway. Like water, moving snow will follow the path of least resistance which, unfortunately, will be your freshly shoveled driveway. Please understand that neither the Town, nor its hired contractors, can come back to shovel or plow out your driveway.

If there is a catch basin in front of your house, you can help by making sure it is clear of snow and debris, which may prevent the road from draining properly.

Finally, please be patient. Snow removal is a very arduous and time-consuming task. The highway department workers and hired snowplow contractors do not get a shift change. They work around the clock until the job is done. We strive for the safest roadways at a reasonable cost, and in the shortest period of time. The cooperation and support of Georgetown residents and businesses is greatly appreciated.