



## **Town of Falmouth**

### **Department of Public Works**

#### **Snow & Ice FAQ's**

**2010**

**1. What is the purpose of the Town of Falmouth's Snow & Ice Policy?**

The purpose of this Snow & Ice Policy is to establish the process for snow and ice control for the Town's street system during the winter months. Winter storms can create hazardous situations for motorists. This policy sets standards for snow and ice removal as efficiently possible keeping roads open and safe. Bare and dry roadways are not reasonably expected throughout Town. Many variables affect winter maintenance operations on Cape Cod. Each storm or weather event may require slightly different efforts or emphasis. The aim of this policy is to return road surfaces to normal winter conditions as soon as feasible.

**2. How is the weather monitored?**

During normal working hours, (7:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., Monday-Friday) our weather sentry as well as the observations of the Public Works employees will alert the first response for storm operations. During after hours, the weather alert system will notify key Public Works personnel responsible for monitoring weather conditions. Additionally, the Police Dept. will call when snow or ice begins to fall.

**3. What is the Town's Responsibility?**

The Department is responsible for approximately 230 miles of Town roads as well as approximately 185 miles of private roads. Only Town roads receive salt & sand treatment, while all roads, including private are plowed as a public safety issue.

**4. How do you rate a storm?**

Level I- Treat roads with salt/sand

Level II- Plowing operation begins with approximately 3 inches of snow.

Level III- Heavy Equipment utilized with snow beyond 12 inches.

**5. How does the town prioritize its roads?**

**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 sections of Town. Priority may be extended to bus routes during early dismissals, then, returning to regular priorities once completed.**

**Priority Two roads, which are secondary roadways that connect to main roads and major residential areas and hilled roadways, are given the next level of priority to move motorist from these areas to the main roads.**

**Priority Three roads, which are all local roads within residential areas, are the last areas to be completed. These are usually completed using private contractors, but may be done with Town recourses in the event of a smaller accumulation.**

**6. What can affect the clean-up of a storm?**

**The timing of a storm is critical. The worst time for a storm is during the high commuting periods. If it begins snowing at 8:00 in the evening and it is over by early morning, snow crews usually have ample time to prepare the roads for the morning commute. But when a storm starts at 6:30 in the morning, or 3:30 in the afternoon, motorist will need to take extra precaution until crews are able to clear the streets.**

**All storm conditions are dictated by temperature, the amount of moisture present in the storm, wind speed, and duration. The combination of these factors is directly related to the conditions that dictate how a storm will be dealt with. Freezing rain, sleet, snow, dry snow, amount of snow, wind conditions and the time of day all contribute to storm conditions.**

**7. If I park on the street, does this cause the road to remain unplowed?**

**If cars are parked on the street and it is unsafe for a plow to get through, then the street will not be plowed until the car or cars are moved. This is particularly important when the street is on a hill.**

**8. When do you open the Emergency Operations Center (EOC)?**

**When we are engaged in a Level 2 event, and precipitation continues to accumulate at a rapid speed, we will upgrade to a Level 3 event when we exceed the 12 inch mark. This will involve all Public Works personnel and private contractors, along with additional private heavy equipment (Loaders, Large plows, etc.). The Town at this point, will likely consider opening the Emergency Operations Center located at the Falmouth Fire & Rescue Headquarters. This call will be made by the Town Manager in conjunction with the Fire Chief. All operations will be closely monitored from this location and calls can be directed there.**

**9. How does the Snow & Ice Policy affect private roads?**

It is the policy of the Department of Public Works to plow all roads within the confines of Falmouth. As such, all private roads are included in the existing road maps that are distributed to route drivers. This is done as a public safety concern to allow emergency vehicles access to all residents. This does not include common driveways, or condominium developments.

It should be noted that the Town does not pre-treat or salt/sand private roads, as we will not sweep these streets or clean catch basins in the spring.

Residents of private roads should also be aware that if the condition of the road becomes impassable or if the roadway becomes encroached with overgrown branches or shrubbery, the Town will refuse to provide services as not to damage our equipment until the conditions are remedied.

**10. Who is responsible for the damage to private property caused by Snow & Ice Removal?**

It is important for homeowners to understand that the average width of Town owned roads are forty (40) feet wide. Often times, residents place obstructions in the right of way (ROW) of Town property. This could include anything from plantings, fencing, railroad tie walls, sprinkler heads, and mailboxes to mention a few. Other than mailboxes, damaged by a direct result of plowing operations, other damage to obstructions in the ROW will not be repaired or replaced by the Town. We recommend that mailboxes be at least a minimum of 18-24 inches off the edge of the pavement. Due to the usual wet nature of snow that is common on the Cape, it is also recommended that a sturdy wolmanized post be utilized. If a post or mailbox is damaged as a result of plowing operations, please notify the Department and a Field Supervisor will investigate to determine if indeed it was a direct result of our operation. If a repair or replacement is necessary, it will be scheduled in a timely matter, and a standard mailbox and post will be installed to meet U.S. Postal Service requirements. If a homeowner had a larger than normal or custom mailbox, it will be up to the homeowner to upgrade. Therefore, it is imperative that homeowners take a close look at items or improvements made in the ROW that may be subject to damage during storm operations.

**11. Do I have to call the DPW to get my road plowed?**

No, you do not have to call to get your road plowed. Every road in town is assigned to a Route. Each route is assigned a driver.

If you have an emergency, you should call the Police or Fire and they will contact the DPW to make sure your road is cleared.

If it is not an emergency we ask that you give a reasonable amount of time for the DPW to clear the roads according to the priorities outlined in the policy (main arteries, secondary roads, etc). If after approximately 4 hours, and your road has not been plowed at all, you can call. The snow route for each section of town takes approximately 4-5 hours to complete, so after the storm has passed, please allow this amount of time to clear the roads.

**12. Is the salt/sand mix available to the public?**

Winter salt/sand mix is available to the general public at the Public Works Facility located at 416 Gifford Falmouth, MA.

As you enter the parking lot from Gifford St. there is a stock pile to your left. Home owners are allowed to fill barrels for their own personal use at home. It is not intended for contractors who are doing private work utilizing this public resource.

**13. Should I mark my property?**

If you live on a curve or at a bend in the road it is helpful for plow operators if you have reflectors placed near the edge of pavement to show where the road turns, particularly with heavy snowfall.

**14. What do I do if I MUST drive during a Snow & Ice storm?**

Driving during a storm should be a last resort. We understand that at certain times of the day, people are going to, or coming from work. We would like to just remind everyone to slow down and drive cautiously and only when absolutely necessary.

Please drive slowly. Excessive speed is often the number one cause of accidents in bad weather.

Please yield the right of way to the snow emergency vehicle. Try to maintain a distance of at least 100 feet. This will provide for a clearer surface as you follow, and keep you out of reach of the spinner so your vehicle is not sandblasted. Many times we have seen motorist become impatient and try to pass a plow or sander. Remember, we are out there trying to make the roads safe for everyone, including ourselves.

Motorist should also remember that having a four wheel drive vehicle does not help you stop any easier on snow or ice covered roadways. There is a false sense of security with those vehicles.

**15. What clean-up is done after the storm?**

Remember that if your road does not look like it is at its full width, we will probably be back to widen it. This will create a windrow in front of your driveway that is unavoidable and unintentional. Please be patient with us.

If there is a catch basin or fire hydrant in front of your property, please help us by digging it out in the event of an emergency.