

Town of Spencer
Highway Department
Snow & Ice Treatment and Plowing Procedures

The Spencer Highway Department is responsible for snow and ice removal on public roads and select private roads (as determined annually by the Board of Selectmen and the Superintendent of Utilities and Facilities). The following is a summary of the Spencer Highway Departments snow and ice procedures. Please be advised that travelers at times of inclement weather should use safe judgment and travel at their own risk.

Seasonal Preparation

Prior to any winter storm event, all vehicles and apparatus equipment are to be inspected, made ready for service, and fueled. Sand and salt is stored in enough supply at all times to cover the entire town through a minimum of one storm event.

Procedure

Public safety is the number one objective and will supersede all other issues. Due to environmental factors and the type of storm, the Highway Foreman will determine the type and the timing of the appropriate roadway treatment. Certain areas of Town have greater intensity of use and priority for maintenance to serve the users. The concern of safety, general welfare and duration of travel necessitate the priority be given to certain areas over others.

The timing of a storm will influence the time and process of snow and ice treatment. The Highway Department endeavors to maintain adequate traction for vehicles properly equipped for winter driving conditions. This does not mean bare, dry pavement conditions should be expected after each snowfall or ice event. Furthermore, this does not mean our streets will be free of snow and ice.

The responsibility for ordering personnel and equipment into service for a winter maintenance operation shall be primarily on the Highway Foreman or his designee. The Police Department, during off hours, shall keep watch and assist in notification of the Highway Foreman or his designee of needed service.

All main arterial streets and cross town connectors, as well as those roads with documented high volume traffic, will be top priority throughout a storm event. All secondary roads will be cleared as their snow accumulation approaches 3" or when topography, physical conditions, ice or other safety concerns require immediate attention as determined by the Highway Foreman. As a rule, gravel and private ways will be plowed after secondary roads. Treatment time with sand, salt and other chemicals, on public ways, will be determined by the Highway Foreman, or his designee. If it is determined by the Highway Foreman that the icy conditions on a private road must be taken care of, it will be done only during normal business hours. All complaints received must be forwarded to the Highway Foreman at the office of Utilities and Facilities at 508-885-7525 (Mon-Thurs, 8am-5pm).

The Highway Department has regular work hours, and if a storm requires attention after hours, weekends, or holidays, this will require overtime.

Personnel Available for Winter Maintenance Program

All full time employees of the Highway Department shall be kept on call at all times from November 15th to April 1st to assist in snow and ice removal.

Generally, a salt mix is applied to Town roads during the early part of a storm to create a brine and keep the snow from freezing. The town is very aware of the harmful effects that salt can have to the environment, therefore, limited quantity is utilized where necessary throughout the snow season. The saline mix prevents bondage of snow to the road, which would create a difficult surface to plow. Once sanding and salt operations have been completed, depending on the timing of the storm, crews will plow the roads. Following the storm, roads may be resanded or widened by plowing as determined by the Highway Foreman. In FY 2013, only nine full-time employees are available to sand /salt and then plow 135 road miles equivalent to 270 lane miles of public and private roads. The Town is divided into six salt/sanding routes. Salt/sanding operations typically take around four hours to complete depending on the conditions. Private contractors are hired by the Highway Department to assist in storm events requiring plowing. The Town is divided into eighteen distinct plow routes. Typical plowing routes take around four hours to complete depending on the conditions. A snow fighting deployment may be divided into shifts if the storm event is expected to last for an extended period.

Resident Cooperation

Please be reminded for public safety purposes that Highway personnel are out on the roadways during extreme road and weather conditions. Resident cooperation is sincerely appreciated at this time. Residents should also avoid travel during this time, as the roads can be difficult to navigate without proper snow equipment. Please be advised that no person shall place or cause to be placed in any of the public streets, sidewalks, or squares any dirt, rubbish, wood, timber, ***snow or other material of any kind*** tending to obstruct the streets or sidewalks. Homeowners will be held accountable for any private contractor negligence and may result in fines in accordance with existing Town By-Laws. Please reference our fines and bylaw page at http://www.spencerma.gov/pages/SpencerMA_News/10252889B.0/Snow%20Placement%20Notice%20Art.%206%20S3_2017-01.pdf for any other questions or concerns about resident cooperation.

Vehicles left on the roadway during snow and ice operations seriously impede our progress and will be reported to the Police. Highway Department vehicles will never pull or tow privately owned vehicles unless directly authorized by the Highway Foreman.

Winter Parking Ban

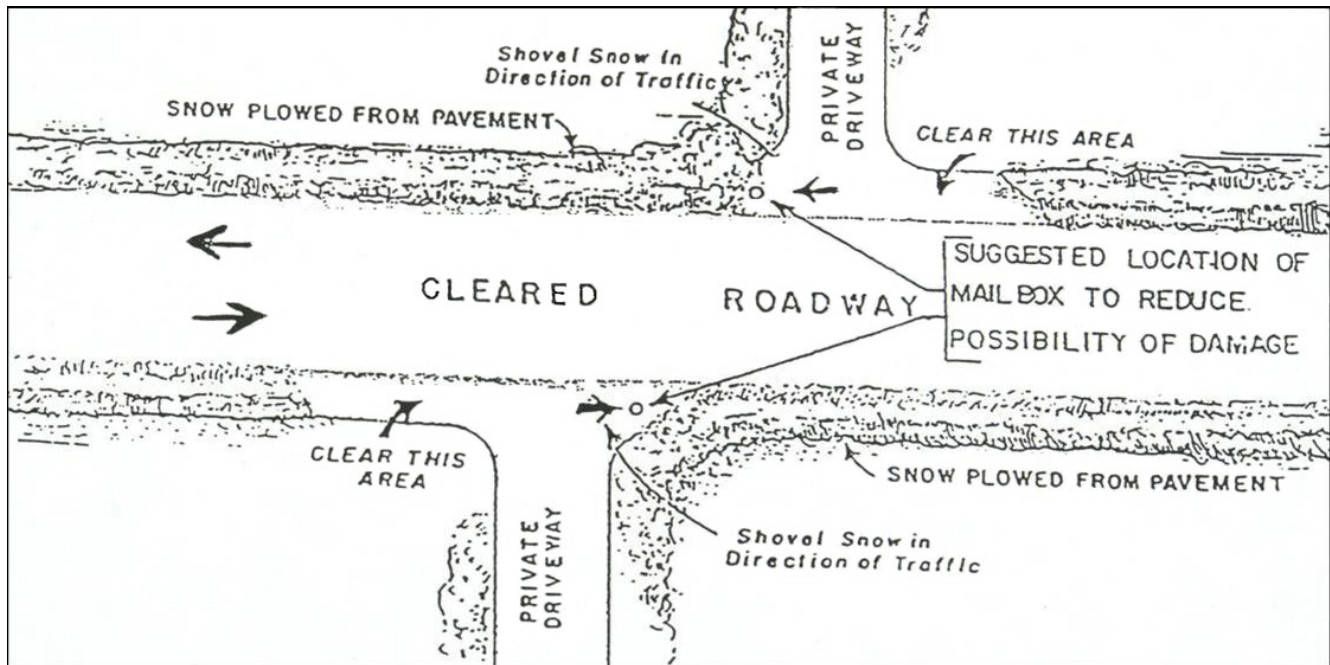
Residents are expected to follow the annually Select Board approved winter parking ban. For information about this ban and associated fees, visit http://www.spencerma.gov/Pages/SpencerMA_Police/ban.pdf

General Snow and Winter Tips

- Stay off the roads unless absolutely necessary.
- Expect any travel to take longer and plan accordingly.
- Drive slowly, and with caution at all times.
- Maintain extra distance to vehicles in front of you, with your headlights on at all times.
- Place reflectors at the edge of your lawn to avoid general landscaping or lawn damage.
- Have patience with regards to snow removal.

Driveway Openings

Please be advised that town plow operators are not permitted nor obligated (by state law) to plow the end of driveways or any private ways free of snow that may have been pushed there from roadway clearance. This may raise concerns, however, there are steps to take to minimize snow blockage at the end of driveways. Please see the following sketch to learn how to properly remove snow to minimize excess driveway blockage.



Private Roads

Private roads must be open to public use. Gated areas, condominiums, and common driveways are not considered private roads.

We try to plow private roads to the best of our ability each storm event. However, there are times where we are limited by poor road conditions or other mitigating factors. In cases where early snowfall occurs while soils are still wet and soft, the difficulties on poor road conditions are exacerbated.

The Town is not responsible for plowing damages to private roads, with the exception of those caused by driving error. Highway Department personnel will not be dispatched to salt, sand, or plow private residences, or shovel out resident mailboxes. Residents are expected to maintain posts and mailboxes to withstand the usual New England winter weather and should repair/replace as needed. Damaged mailboxes that are in the path of snow plows or snow being plowed are the responsibility of the **homeowner**. Please refer to the Town of Spencer's Winter Plowing Damage and Mailbox Policy for any further information. This document can be seen at http://www.spencerma.gov/Pages/SpencerMA_Highway/PlowingDamagePolicy.pdf

Our abilities to plow private roads are can be further limited or restricted in situations where private roads are in poor condition. It is the responsibility of the private road owners to maintain their roads in a state where the width and conditions are acceptable for plow operation, snow storage, and full plow vehicle movement

including turnarounds (including allowing for a full season of snow storage). Deficiencies in any of these or other areas could inhibit operations partially or fully. Also please keep in mind that the Town uses private plow operators that change or rotate seasonally and can even change storm to storm.

The private road must be maintained by the private owners in a condition free from dangerous defects that would inhibit the safe operation of snow and ice removal equipment. Roads shall be free of speed bumps, improperly adjusted utility structures, and other obstructions. Brush and trees shall be cut back a minimum of four feet from the edge of the traveled way and a minimum of ten feet above truck clearance elevations.

In cases where improvements to private road conditions are necessary including but not limited to grade, potholes, drainage, snow storage to allow us to traverse and plow it properly without damaging equipment the road owners and abutting property owners will be notified by mail from the Select Board. This notice shall state that the private road will not be plowed by Town forces until said repairs are made by the private road abutting property owners. These repairs must satisfy the expectation of the Utilities and Facilities Superintendent.

The list of private roads that are qualified for snow and ice removal by Town forces shall be determined annually by the Select Board and the Superintendent of Utilities and Facilities. Private roads that have been removed from the sand and plow list may petition the Select Board for acceptance once required repairs have been satisfactorily completed.

The Utilities and Facilities Superintendent should be contacted regarding recommended and/or necessary road repair requirements. The Town Administrator's office should be contacted with any questions regarding the Town's private acceptance procedures.

Conclusion

The Town of Spencer is devoted to providing a safe and travel friendly environment year-round. With the help of the local police department as well as local residents, we work together to deliver complete snow removal in a timely manner to the entire Town of Spencer. Our plow operators follow a specific set of guidelines brought upon by the Highway Foreman to ensure the most efficient method of snow removal possible.

Contact Us

Any questions comments or concerns may be directed to the office of Utilities and Facilities at:

Utilities and Facilities Office
At Spencer Water Dept. Bldg.
3 Old Meadow Rd.
Spencer, MA 01562
(508) 885-7525
(Mon-Thurs, 8am-5pm)