

Understanding Litchfield Public Works Snow and Ice Operations

The following is an overview of the Town of Litchfield's Public Works preparation and operational plan for the upcoming winter season. We have been busy preparing for the winter season. This includes plow repair and painting; chemical spreader calibration and servicing; mixing of salt and sand; plow route review; and assigning levels of service to each town road. Provisions contained in this document may be updated and reviewed as conditions change.

It is our goal to remove snow and ice as rapidly and efficiently as possible from Town roads. Safety and mobility of the community is of utmost importance. Many times a herculean effort is needed to reach this goal. Litchfield Public Works takes pride in clearing our roads and is dedicated to performing in a professional manner.

Each storm is different and presents challenges that can be very difficult to handle. Such things as temperature, time of day, traffic conditions, total amount of snow and rate of precipitation (freezing rain, snow, sleet) are just a few factors affecting the impact of the storm. However, depth alone can be a deceptive yard stick. For instance, a small storm during a weekday rush hour can cause havoc, while the same storm on a weekend or late at night may cause little trouble. Light snow and heavy wind will cause continual drifting and ice formation. Heavy wet snow and sleet will pack on road surfaces and bring trees and power lines down, causing additional problems. Snow turning to rain can cause issues including road flooding. By far the most dangerous condition of all is freezing rain or icing. Many times it takes an extreme amount of time in these types of conditions to get chemicals and sand on roads. This was evident during one of last winter's events. Trucks must travel at an extremely low rate of speed, and in many cases a smaller vehicle must be used to travel in front of a larger sander so it does not slide off the road. This is time consuming but necessary to protect the workers from injury and the equipment from damage. At the end of the season, we are confident every effort has been made to clean our roads as rapidly as possible.

CONTACTS:

If you have an emergency situation, please call 911. They will contact us directly.

For nonemergency situations, please call 268-4721; email us at publicworks@litchfieldmaine.org; or check the town website (www.litchfieldmaine.org under the Departments/Road Commissioner tab or the Contact Us tab (Public Works on drop down list.)

PLOW ROUTES:

The Town (37 square miles) is divided into four routes. Each truck is assigned a certain route. We plow 32 miles (64 lane miles) of roads in Litchfield.

LEVELS OF SERVICE:

It is impossible to maintain a snow and ice-free road during a storm. It is the intention of Public Works to provide practical, safe access along Town roads and municipal facilities during winter storms. The department shall strive to achieve bare pavement three and one-half feet either side of the center line of all priority roads as soon as possible. All operational decisions regarding applications of salt and sand, and scheduling of plow cycles will be based on this goal.

During this process after a storm, you may observe slush on the roads. This is a normal condition that occurs after deicing materials have been applied. After a predetermined time which depends upon traffic

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flow and temperature, we will plow off the accumulation and repeat the process if necessary to achieve our previously stated goal. Please use caution when you encounter these conditions. Many people think that the road has not been plowed. However, that is not the case. We strive to prevent the buildup from creating a dangerous condition; however, despite our best efforts this can and does happen. It is important to adjust your driving to the conditions at hand. Almost all bad weather traffic accidents are the failure of an operator to adjust to the driving conditions and to reduce speed.

We do not use straight salt. We use a mixture of ten parts sand to one part salt. Therefore, our roads will not “bare up” as quickly as state Routes 126 and 197 as the state has designated these roads as “salt priority” (use of straight salt only).

It is our policy to begin snow and ice operations upon accumulation of one inch of wet snow and two inches of dry snow. The Public Works foreman may begin operations sooner or later depending upon other factors such as freezing rain, sleet, etc.

PRIORITIES:

Highest service levels are given to main roads with the highest traffic levels. Less-travelled roads may be cleared less often, but all roads will eventually be plowed to the same standard.

Other priorities are:

- Public safety facilities
- Hills and dangerous intersections
- School facilities
- Municipal parking lots
- Dry hydrants (after the storm)

CYCLE TIMES (how long it takes a plow to complete its route):

Cycle times vary depending upon conditions. Less-travelled roads have longer cycle times than high traffic priority roads. Most are 1-2 hours. This increases depending upon snow fall rate and the time between 10 p.m.-4 a.m. by 2-4 hours. All workers (foreman included) work until the job is complete. This can—and many times does—involve many hours without rest/sleep. Please be patient. If you have an emergency, call 911. They will contact us directly.

The policy outlined above serves as a general overview of the normal policy operating procedures for winter maintenance. Any of the following may affect/delay the normal operating procedures of this policy:

- Equipment breakdown.
- Snow accumulation in excess of 1inch per hour
- Freezing rain or other icing conditions
- Extreme storm conditions (blizzard, snow accumulation in excess of 12 inches)
- Traffic conditions
- Emergencies