

Frequently Asked Questions about Winter Maintenance



How does the New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NHDOT) prepare for winter?

The preparation begins in the summer when orders are placed and shipments start for anticipated quantities of salt and sand needed for the upcoming season. Trucks and plows are inspected and repairs made as necessary. The number of plow trucks required is determined and private contractors are signed up to supplement state equipment. Training of employees in the latest methods of snow removal is also provided

During a snowstorm is it safe for me to be out driving around?

In most storms, it is recommended that travel be limited to essential trips only. However, travel conditions during a storm vary greatly depending on the type and intensity of the storm. Before venturing out you should consider the type and condition of your vehicle, your physical and mental condition, and the reason for making the trip at this time. If you feel you must go out during a storm, it's recommended you check the weather forecast for the area you plan to travel.

I am uncomfortable following slow moving snowplow trucks during a storm. Couldn't they go faster or pull over frequently to allow traffic to pass them?

Plow trucks travel at a speed necessary to safely perform the work, which can include placement of salt or sand along with plowing the snow. Factors impacting the speed include the intensity of the storm, which can impair visibility, type of precipitation, dry or heavy wet snow, sleet or freezing rain and the potential to strike fallen or hidden objects. Following plow trucks too closely can be dangerous to you and the driver of the truck. Many times a snow cloud is created behind the plow truck that can obscure your vision in addition to "hiding" your vehicle. Any emergency stops or turns by the plow truck could result in a rear end collision. By pulling over, the truck would lengthen the time it would take to clear the roads plus you would be driving on a snow-covered road instead of a cleared one. Additionally passing vehicles have a tendency to accelerate, which on a snow covered road could lead to loss of control and a potential head on crash with oncoming traffic. It is safer for you to stay back behind the plow truck and be patient.

What materials does NHDOT use in performing snow and ice removal?

Salt (sodium chloride), sand and calcium chloride are all utilized in combating winter storms in New Hampshire. Salt is the principal anti-icer, as it has been proven to be the most cost effective anti-icing agent available. Sand enhances traction on hills and corners during a storm. Calcium chloride is used with salt in very cold storms to act as a trigger to start the formation of salt brine to aid in the deicing process

During a snowstorm a plow truck knocked over my mailbox. Will the state repair/replace it?

Despite our precautions, plow trucks or the plowed snow can inadvertently strike or push over a mailbox. This usually occurs during periods of low visibility or during heavy snowfalls. The Department will not assume responsibility for repairs to those boxes located in our Right-of-Way; however, we will work with the homeowner to locate or design a mailbox system that will minimize snowplow damage.

Why is my road the last to get plowed?

NHDOT has classified all of its roads for priority work based upon the importance of the highway and traffic volumes. Plow routes are assigned to various trucks to comply with the Department's Snow & Ice Policy, which indicates the allowable snow accumulation on the road and the frequency of the plowing effort.

Why doesn't the snowplow carry the snow past my driveway instead of plowing into it?

As we plow we need to keep a consistent plowed width of roadway. If the truck swerved out around your driveway or stopped to push the snow around it, this width would vary and could force a vehicle to strike the snow ridge if oncoming traffic was encountered.

I just get my driveway cleared and the snowplow comes by again and fills the end in again. How often is this going to happen?

During a storm we will continue to plow and treat the roads until cessation of the storm. A final run is made to push back the snow banks to prevent snowmelt from running onto the travel surface, provide more room for additional snow storage and increase sight distance and visibility.

On multi-lane highways there are up to six plows in a row, why are there so many?*

Tandem Plowing (in echelon) clears the snow from all the lanes at once, eliminating snow ridges that might be a hazard to motorists. If you encounter this, please stay back and do not attempt to pass among the plow trucks. It is the safest and most efficient snow removal method for multi-lanes highways, though sometimes annoying to motorists. Plowing in tandem clears all lanes at once by passing a ridge of snow from one plow to the next.

***Advantages of Tandem Plowing**

- Ability to completely clear a roadway and deposit snow at the side of the roadway.
 - Increases the productivity of overall plowing operations
 - Efficiently and effectively clears snow from all lanes while treating the entire roadway.
 - Requires less use of anti-icing materials, and saves time and money.
 - Prevents the buildup of snow and ice from vehicle traffic.
 - Avoids leaving "wing rows" of snow in the road that can be potentially dangerous.
 - Reduces the number and severity of crashes.
 - Prevents issue of having snow thrown back onto previously plowed pavement.
 - Removes snow from a narrow median on far left lanes to the right shoulder.
 - Allows for some trucks to separate and immediately clear blocked ramps.
 - Prevents unsafe driving maneuvers, including vehicles passing plows.
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