



ELBERT COUNTY PUBLIC WORKS POLICIES AND PROCEDURES



PURPOSE: To provide efficient snow and ice removal services that keep roads safe for drivers traveling on Elbert County roadways.

DEPARTMENT: Elbert County Public Works
Road & Bridge Division

TITLE Snow Removal Policy
POLICY CUSTODIAN Public Works- Road & Bridge Division
ADOPTION DATE November 18, 2020
REVISION DATE

1. Introduction

Elbert County, Colorado, believes that it is in the best interest of the residents of the County to assume basic responsibility for snow and ice control on accepted County roads by resolution of the Elbert County Board of County Commissioners. Effective snow and ice control are necessary for routine travel and the provision of emergency services. The County will attempt to provide such control in a safe and cost-effective manner keeping in mind safety, budget, personnel, and environmental concerns. The County may use County employees and equipment and/or private contractors to provide this service.

The snowplowing and ice control policy is intended to keep the roads within the County passable during adverse weather conditions and in reasonably safe condition. This intent, and the reasonable limitation of cost effectiveness, is the basis for this policy.

This policy does not relieve the operators of private vehicles, pedestrians, property owners, residents, and all others that may be using public roadways, of their responsibility to act in a reasonable, prudent and cautious manner given the prevailing road conditions.

2. Level of Service

The time required to clear snow and ice from roadways depends on a variety of conditions often unique to each storm event. The strategies used to plow roads depend on several factors including:

- * Snowstorm intensity and accumulation;
- * Anticipated snowstorm duration;
- * Type of snow, ranging from light/dry to heavy/wet;
- * Ambient air and pavement surface temperatures before and expected after snowfall;
- * High winds and drifting conditions;
- * Traffic conditions, weekday versus weekend;
- * Time of day;
- * Time of season – fall, winter or spring; and
- * Availability of equipment and staff.

Snowplowing and/or ice control operations will be performed on all Priority 1 and Priority 2 (arterial and collector) streets for every storm when an accumulation of snow or ice is present on roadway surfaces. **The County's goal is to deploy resources at least one hour before challenging conditions are reasonably expected to develop.** The County uses local meteorologists and on-line resources to develop an operations plan for every expected winter storm.

Snowplowing will be performed on Priority 3 (local streets) when the roadway accumulation of snow has reached six (6) inches, wind speeds have decreased, and the storm has or is nearing the end. Roadway and ambient air temperatures early and late in the snow season are typically high enough to melt falling snow on contact or soon after the snowfall event ends. The majority of plowed storms in Elbert County occur within the November to March time period.

Local road plowing operations may commence once the six- (6-) inch roadway accumulation threshold has been exceeded or is reasonably expected to be exceeded, as determined by the Public Works Director (the “Director”) or designee.

The Director or designee will determine when to begin snow or ice control operations for arterial and collector streets (Priority 1 and 2). The criteria for the deployment decision include:

- * Anticipated snow or ice accumulation on County roadways;
- * Drifting of snow that causes problems for travel;
- * Time of year and predicted weather forecast; and,
- * Time of snowfall in relationship to heavy use of roads.

Snow and ice control operations are expensive and involve the use of personnel, materials and equipment. For reference, the County will be prepared to deploy approximately seven (7) plow/spreader trucks to keep Priority 1 and 2 roads clear. An additional twenty (20) motor graders are available to plow Priority 3 gravel roads, under conditions described later in this policy.

No general ice control will be performed on local streets. Ice control on steep slopes, near storm water inlets and stop sign approaches will be performed on local streets as determined to be necessary and subject to available personnel and equipment. Generally, ice accumulations caused by shade that do not interfere with vehicle travel ways will not be treated. Shade dams, particularly along the south side of streets, can cause ice to remain for weeks or months and are to be expected in this region of Colorado.

3. Road Priorities

The County has classified roads based on the street function, traffic volume and relative importance to the transportation needs of the County. Three (3) priority rankings have been established for public County roadways. A listing of all County roads with their priority ranking is available on the County website on the Road & Bridge page.

Priority 1 (Arterials): These streets are classified as arterials and commercial/industrial and commercial business roads. They are typically high-volume roads that connect major sections of the County.

Priority 2 (Collectors): Those roads are classified as collectors and/or secondary streets which typically receive a moderate amount of traffic. Collectors are often utilized to access Priority 1 roads from subdivisions. Priority 2 roads also include designated snow routes where parking is prohibited once roadway accumulations reach a two- (2-) inch or greater depth.

Priority 3 (Locals): Local roads function to provide vehicular access to adjacent properties. They are designed for ease of access to adjacent parcels of land. Most gravel roads and subdivision roads are examples of Priority 3 roads.

Elbert County works closely with our local School Districts. Snowplow operations are communicated with all school districts for all storms. Most rural routes are Priority 3 roads and follow the same prioritization as indicated above, however School Districts are aware that they may contact Elbert County Road & Bridge to assist buses at any time.

Please note that the Colorado Department of Transportation maintains all portions of State Highway 86, State Highway 24 and Interstate 70 in Elbert County.

During significant and severe storm events, the County is prepared to deploy personnel and equipment to maintain Priority 1 roadways first. In fulfilling the need to have all Priority 1 streets safe and passable, and when resources are limited, snowplowing and treating of all other streets may be stopped at any time so resources can be focused on Priority 1 roads. Once Priority 1 roads have been sufficiently serviced, Priority 2 roads will be plowed and treated as necessary. Priority 3 roads will be the last roads that are plowed.

Unforeseeable circumstances may cause delays in completing assigned plow routes. Such circumstances may include weather conditions that endanger the safety of snowplow operators and/or safe and effective operation of equipment, commuter traffic, disabled vehicles, poor visibility conditions, parked cars along streets, obstructions in right-of-way such as garbage cans and mailboxes, assistance to emergency response vehicles, equipment breakdowns and personnel shortages.

4. Plowing Method

Snow will be plowed in a manner so as to minimize traffic obstructions. The center of the roadway will be plowed first. The snow is then pushed from inside to outside on two-way streets on subsequent plowing passes. On one-way streets or where there is a wide center median, snow may be pushed in either direction. Snow in cul-de-sacs will normally be plowed to the center in an attempt to provide the largest turning radius possible for emergency vehicle ingress and egress. When a plow goes onto a bridge, the driver shall slow down so snow does not go over the bridge, if possible. In times of extreme snowfall, streets may not be completely cleared of snow.

5. Snow Removal

The Director or designee will determine if and when snow will be removed from an area by loader and truck. Such snow removal may occur during historical snow fall amounts, such as those seen during the Bomb Cyclone weather event in 2018.

6. Snow and Ice Control Operator's Schedule

Snowplow operators may be required to work up to a twelve (12) hour shift when necessary. Because of safety concerns, all possible efforts will be made to avoid an operator working more than a twelve (12) hour continuous shift in any twenty-four- (24-) hour period. Snow control operations will continue twenty-four (24) hours per day until storms subside and the primary roadway network is in serviceable condition.

7. Extreme Weather Conditions

Snow and ice control operations will be conducted when weather conditions do not endanger the safety of snowplow operators and equipment. Factors that may delay snow and ice control operations include severe cold, significant winds and limited visibility. Total white out blizzard conditions may necessitate the declaration of a prohibition on all vehicle movements, including County snowplows, until visibility is improved. **The Elbert County Board of County Commissioners** has the authority to declare a state of emergency and prohibit the movement of all vehicles on public roads.

8. Snow Route

The Director of Public Works shall have the power and authority to designate certain roads within the County as snow routes, and post signs along these routes advising of their designation. Designated snow routes shall abide to the following:

- * Whenever there is any covering or coating of snow, sleet or ice and roads designation as a snow route or during emergency snow conditions, no person in charge of a motor vehicle operated on any such road shall allow the vehicle to remain parked on such road or stopped unattended on such road;
- * Any vehicle parked or stopped unattended on such road shall be subject to immediate removal at the cost of the vehicle owner;
- * Neither the County or any person acting under its direction shall be billable for any damages to such vehicle occasioned by such removal.

9. Use of Liquid and Solid De-icing Chemicals

The County may use liquid and solid de-icing chemicals when hazardous ice or slippery conditions exist. The County is concerned about the effect of such chemicals on the environment and carefully controls and monitors application rates.

10. Emergency Situations

All requests for emergency assistance from the following agencies will be responded to immediately, as personnel and equipment are available:

- * Elbert County Sheriff's Office
- * Fire Districts within Elbert County
- * Douglas/Elbert County Dispatch
- * School District Bus Routes
- * Colorado Department of Transportation;
- * Colorado State Patrol; or
- * Other emergency service agencies.

Calls for emergency assistance shall be made by calling 911.

11. Emergency Declaration and Activation of the Emergency Operations Center (EOC)

In the event of a snow emergency, the Elbert County Board of County Commissioners, Elbert County Emergency Manager or designee may declare a County emergency and activate the necessary functions of the County's Emergency Operations Center (EOC). Following this declaration, traffic control and law enforcement will assume emergency response actions.

12. Disabled Vehicles and Vehicles Parked on Designated Snow Routes

County employees will not assist vehicles that are stuck in the snow or otherwise disabled. If a vehicle is impeding the safe travel on a road, or parked on a designated snow route, the Elbert County Sheriff's Office may tow the vehicle at the owner's expense. Per C.R.S 42-4-1803, at the request of law enforcement Elbert County personnel may remove a disabled vehicle from a roadway if it is creating a hazardous obstruction by use of equipment.

13. Sidewalks/Driveways

It is the responsibility of the resident and/or property owner to remove all accumulated snow from all sidewalks along public streets adjoining their property. This includes any snow plowed from public streets onto the sidewalk, driveways or driveway openings (see Section 15). Please remember, it is unlawful to plow or place snow into public roadways from parking lots, sidewalks or driveways. Cleanup and widening operations often take place one to four days after the snowstorm, depending upon the severity of the storm and wind conditions. It is often necessary to widen roads to ensure that ice, snow melt and drifting is kept to a minimum. Unfortunately, subsequent widening operations may push snow back onto sidewalks and driveways.

14. Snow Removal on Private Property

Unless it is necessary to provide access for emergency vehicles, County resources will not be used to plow, remove snow or provide ice control on private roads, roads in 2-year maintenance warranty, or private property per the Elbert County Construction Standards and Specifications policy.

15. Property Damage

Elbert County strives to perform snow removal with respect to personal property. However, especially during snow with heavy accumulations or moisture content property damage may occur. If you have property damage supported by evidence that occurred from snowplow operations, please contact our office. Mailboxes installed along roadways within right-of-way are at the risk of the owner. Mailboxes damaged during snow plowing operations are not the responsibility of the County.

16. Property Owner Responsibilities

Snow shall not be shoveled or deposited onto any road or other public right-of-way since it can impede drainage and contribute to icing on roadways and sidewalks. Such behavior also creates a public safety driving hazard.

17. Complaint Procedure

Complaints will be logged and routed to the appropriate department. Complaint procedures can be found on our website. Phones and email may not be monitored during storms that close County offices or when personnel are limited. If you have an emergency, you should call 911.

18. Review and Modification of Policy

The Director will consider annually comments and complaints and any other factors affecting the policy or its implementation to determine whether to recommend modifications to the Elbert County Board of County Commissioners.

19. Emergency Vehicles

During active snow control operations, snowplows and spreaders are considered to be emergency vehicles. All operations vehicles are equipped with conspicuous yellow and blue warning lights during plowing and treating.