

TOWN OF DANBY -- WINTER OPERATIONS POLICY

Adopted May 16, 2019

Purpose:

The purpose of an accepted winter operations policy is to define the scope of procedures for snow and ice control and removal. The primary objective with winter operations is to maintain the safety and mobility of the travelling public. Although financial limitations ultimately affect the level of service that is provided, every effort will be made to provide safe roadway conditions as soon as possible with available resources (budget, personnel, equipment and materials).

Vermont storms vary dramatically with regards to precipitation, prediction and timing. The Highway Department will coordinate operations to fit each event. This plan is intended as a guide for “average” conditions. Safety is the #1 priority for roads, people, and road crew.

General:

During the winter period extending from November 1 – April 30, the Highway Department’s main principal is controlling snow and ice on roughly 56 miles of road. A prioritization of roads has been established to address winter maintenance. Resource limitations do not allow for 24 hour continuous winter maintenance service during storm events. Best management practices limit employees plowing hours. There may be reduced or no winter maintenance between the hours of 9:00 PM and 4:00 AM.

The Highway Department strives to keep roads safe for the travelling public, however, the Town does not have a “bare roads” policy. Roads may be snow covered during and following storm events. Adverse driving conditions are to be expected and motor vehicle operators must be prepared for such. The following is a list of actions (provided by V-Trans) that drivers should adhere to in order to accommodate safe winter driving:

- A) Slow down. Driving too fast on wintry roads is the leading cause of crashes.
- B) Travel at a safe distance. Allow at least 3 car lengths in order to leave plenty of room to stop.
- C) Watch for plow trucks. Do not crowd/tailgate slow moving maintenance and emergency vehicles.
- D) Do not use cruise control on snow covered roads.
- E) Four-wheel drive vehicle capabilities should not be overestimated.
- F) Clear all snow and ice from vehicle prior to travel.
- G) Have proper snow tires on you vehicle.
- H) Be aware of black ice on what appears to be bare pavement

Materials:

The town keeps a stockpile of sand at the Highway garage for use during winter months. The town also stockpiles salt in a shed at the Highway garage.

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Ordinances/Laws:

Title 19, Section 1111 of Vermont Statutes Annotated prohibits the encroachment of the Town right-of-way (ROW) without prior approval of the Select Board. Objects in the ROW are placed there at the owner's risk and the Town assumes no responsibility for any damage to objects placed in violation of the statute. Common items in the ROW are fences, flower pots, basketball hoops, etc. Recovery of damages will be pursued by the Town if any equipment is damaged due to placement of objects in the ROW.

Title 19, Section 1111 (b) prohibits the depositing of "material of any kind within, or to in any way ... obstruct a ditch, culvert or drainage course that drains a highway". Snow is not to be pushed or placed into these areas at any time.

Title 23, Section 1126 (a) of Vermont Statutes Annotated prohibits plowing or blowing snow into or across a State or Town highway, shoulder or sidewalk. Although this is hard to avoid, material should not be left such that it creates an obstruction or mound. Violation of this law may result in a fine as determined by the State of Vermont (presently \$70.00).

Title 23, Section 1102 of Vermont Statutes Annotated prohibits unattended vehicles from interfering with highway maintenance. Vehicles may be towed without warning.

Public Communication/Information:

The Highway Department does not purposely plow snow into private driveways – it is the natural result of plowing operations. When clearing walkways/driveways, individuals should be aware of oncoming plow trucks. Do not attempt to "protect" cleared driveways/walkways by standing at the entrance.

Individuals in close proximity to oncoming plow trucks may be injured by snow or debris in the snow from the plow or by the plow itself.

The construction of snow forts, tunnels or similar structures in roadside snow should be avoided.

The Town of Danby is not responsible for vegetation, fences, structures or mailboxes in the Town highway Rights-of-Way damaged during snowplowing. (Adopted 07/10/2014)

Damage incurred from heavy snow coming off plows will not warrant repair/replacement. All mailboxes shall be properly secured before winter.

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Lawn damage within the ROW may occur even though highway personnel do their best to prevent it. Excessive damage, as determined by the Road Commissioner may be repaired in the spring or when soil conditions allow.

Prioritization:

During a storm event, priority will be given to school bus routes.

- A) The Danby Highway Department will **not** maintain private roads or private driveways.
- B) Priority will be given to intersections, hills and curves..
- C) School bus routes will be prioritized as appropriate considering status of school operation.
- D) Milk truck routes for our 3 farms.
- E) Paved roads.
- F) High travel -- Brook Road, Danby Hill Road, Baker Brook Road, Danby Mountain Road, Parris Hill and Kraft Hill.

Procedure:

Using available resources and judgment based on experience, the Highway Foreman or his designated representative will determine the appropriate level and timing of snow and ice control to be performed by the Highway Department and will inform the Road Commissioner by noon the next day of any overtime incurred in the winter maintenance. Each storm is a unique event, therefore, deviations from the routine maintenance plan may occur. Decisions must be made using individual judgment based upon a current assessment of the situation. Town highway drivers are given the responsibility to make decisions regarding snow removal and material application to keep the roads trafficable and reasonably safe while concurrently minimizing costs.

When a storm is predicted, trucks will be loaded and ready to go the night before. Plowing/sanding will begin at 4:00 AM – 4:30 AM on average. In general, snow will be plowed and sand/salt mixtures, or sand, will be applied during a storm to keep roads open to traffic and to provide an operable roadway surface. Sand/salt mixtures, or sand will be applied to roadway centers. For paved roads, one-third (1/3) bare pavement will be provided in the middle of the road as soon as practical. Curves, hills, intersections and bus routes will be given additional attention. For continuous storms, repeated applications will be required.

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Generally, when temperatures are above 20 degrees Fahrenheit, salt or sand/salt mixtures will be applied to paved roads while sand will be applied to gravel roads. When temperatures are below 20 degrees Fahrenheit, sand will be used.

Following storm events, continued maintenance will include improvement of road surfaces by clearing packed snow, pushing back snow on road shoulders (winging), removing excess snow piles within the business district and opening/thawing culverts, ditches and storm drains.

Conclusion:

Vermont winters provide a variety of challenges for town highway personnel, public travelers and private property owners. The adopted Winter Operations Policy should be a source of information and education for the general public. Working together, all entities involved can help to make aspects of winter maintenance easier and winter travel safer for everyone.

The above Winter Operations Policy was duly adopted and signed at a properly warned meeting of the Danby Select Board on May 16, 2019.