

VERNAL CITY PUBLIC WORKS SNOW REMOVAL POLICY

The primary objective of this snow removal policy is to provide safe, efficient effort in snow and/or ice management, with a minimum budget impact. The secondary objective is to produce a minimum of inconvenience to the public in doing so.

The Vernal Streets Department endeavors to maintain adequate traction for pedestrians and vehicles properly equipped for winter driving conditions. This does not mean bare, dry pavement should be expected after each snow fall or ice storm. Furthermore, it does not mean that streets will be free of ice and snow.

Sanding of city streets shall commence when requested by the Vernal City Police Department, the Vernal City manager, or under direction of street supervisory personnel.

Sanding priorities are also collector roads and arterial streets with secondary and residential streets following as needed.

Depending on current and forecast temperatures, as well as the outlook for future storms, plowing may be delayed until snow reaches at least three inches, and additional accumulation is expected.

It has been our experience that plowing inconveniences and tends to anger residents as snow blocks driveways, mailbox access, etc. Therefore, it is our intent when possible to leave the smaller snow accumulations (less than three inches) on the road and melt it in place.

Plowing priority is given first to arterial and collector roads and then secondary and residential streets, where depending on the type of storm event it may be that only traffic lanes are initially opened.

Following major storms when conditions have moderated, Streets personnel will handle such diverse activities as cleaning cul-de-sacs / dead ends, plowing snow berms back to allow for on street parking, and removing snow from business areas, depending on build up.

Public Parking Lots which are maintained by Vernal City will generally be plowed by the Street Department within 24 hours of the end of snow event or as personnel and equipment become available.

Complaints for snow and ice removal can be made to the Public Works Department office during working hours at 789-6924 or by calling central dispatch after regular business hours at 789-4222.

Many times the Public Works Department receives calls regarding snowplow trucks depositing snow at the end of driveways or in front of mailboxes. This is a reality of snow plowing, and it cannot be helped. If our roads are to be plowed, the snow must be pushed to the side of the road. If you have a neighbor who is unable to remove the snow from their driveway or in front of their mail boxes, please assist them, as the City does not have the resources or the manpower to clear drive approaches or mail boxes. We ask for your understanding and cooperation.

No snow or ice removed from private property shall be deposited in the public ways, and include the following:

1. Pushing or carrying and depositing snow or ice on a public right of way or sidewalk.
2. The blowing of snow or ice into a pedestrian or vehicle travel lane.

Residents and businesses should remember to clear their sidewalks within 24 hours of a snow or ice event. You are also asked not to push, or allow your contractor to push snow or ice across or into City streets. This is dangerous and is an illegal activity, which may result in a fine to the property owner or contractor.

There can be no standard plan of attack for snow and ice control which can be followed as a firm recipe, inasmuch as each storm event is different. Your cooperation will greatly assist Vernal city in these efforts and is greatly appreciated.

The following is a more In-depth explanation of the above Vernal City Public Works Snow Removal Policy

The primary objective of Vernal City's snow removal policy is to (with minimum budget impact) provide reasonably safe roads upon which vehicles properly equipped for winter driving conditions may travel. The secondary objective is to attempt a minimum of inconvenience to the public in doing so.

The removal process varies dependent on the type of precipitation, depth, temperature of air and pavement and timing of winter weather events. Inasmuch as no two storms are alike, Vernal City does not attempt one standard plan of attack for all snow and ice control but rather responds to the needs of each storm while considering the current best forecast and acting within the general criteria which follows below.

For storm events with an accumulation of less than 4 inches of snow and with moderate temperatures expected to follow, only salt and sanding operations will be utilized in an attempt to melt the snow in place rather than inconvenience residents with snow berms blocking driveways and mailboxes.

Plowing operations are initiated in snow events with accumulations greater than 4 inches of snow with additional accumulation expected and/or where severe cold temperatures are forecast. Vernal City will clear the travel lanes of the main snow accumulation (not to dry pavement) and sand and salt the intersections. This is first done on main arterial and collector roads then subsequent roads followed by neighborhoods and cul-de-sacs. The main objective during a snowstorm is to keep roadways passable. At the end of the storm, the plows begin to widen out all roads by pushing back the amassed snow to maintain the traveled way and where possible allow for parking. Residents may want to wait until the roads have been widened out before clearing the entrance of their driveways if they wish to avoid doing so more than once..

Snow removal policies tend to be similar in most heavy snowbelt cities. The reason is simple, COST. The most budget effective manner in which to open a road for public travel is to move the snow from the center of the road to the edge, then require each individual property owner to be responsible to open their own driveway and mailbox access.

Vernal City attempts to keep an open mind and continues to try various ideas to minimize the accumulation of snow berm in driveways. One example is the snow restrictors we envisioned, built and installed several years ago on our plows. While not a total answer they do help to some extent on smaller storms but are overpowered with heavy snowfall.

There are always numerous questions that arise from winter snow maintenance operations; perhaps we can attempt to answer a few.

Why do you have to plow the snow into my driveway?

We do understand that the process of moving the snow to the shoulder of the road will push snow onto driveways as the snow leaves the plow and we really don't have a choice. If the plow is angled the other way as it passes it will deposit the snow back into the road, if we raise the plow as we pass we will dump even more snow in front of your house and not clear the road.

Why don't you plow the snow all the way to the curb the first time you are there instead of coming back later after my driveway is clean and filling it again?

We know that it's frustrating to shovel your driveway and then have the plow come by and push snow back at the base. Although we'd like to minimize the problem, we have only a limited number of trucks with which to plow the entire city area. We must attempt to open up the city to travel and then go back through and plow back the shoulders as we can, (often times depending upon temperature this happens on following days to avoid additional overtime.) Also storms seldom come by and dump their entire load in an hour or two and leave. Some storms can last for days necessitating keeping roads open and then plowing back as operators are available. There is no "efficient and cost effective" way to plow the roadway so that your driveway remains snow free.

Why don't you simply plow the snow to the middle of the road?

First: Snow plowed to the middle of the road creates a winter playground attracting neighborhood children into the middle of the street where they slide down the slope right into traffic lanes.

Second: As the sun comes out it melts some of the snow causing water to run across the road and re-freeze each night creating black ice conditions for weeks to come.

Third: The snow windrow down the middle of the street causes a whole host of property access, visibility, and liability problems.

Fourth: Most streets are not wide enough to allow for a large windrow of snow down the center and still maintain on-street parking and full lanes of traffic in each direction.

Why don't you just haul the snow away?

People do not really think about the sheer volume of snow this would be, nor the cost involved. For only a small 6" snow storm accumulation, if you calculate the volume of snow that would be removed from Vernal City streets, even subtracting for the compaction that would take place as it's handled, it would still be a volume of snow that would take over 30,000 of our dump truck loads to haul away. Then we have the problem that each of our sanding units would have to be removed first and reloaded again before the onset of next storm. Last of all is the question of where do we put that much snow? Remember this is only one 6" storm.

How do I keep the city from plowing snow back into my driveway after I have scooped my drive?

When you scoop snow from your driveway, we ask that you keep the snow to the right side of your driveway (as you are facing the street). This will help you avoid having your driveway plowed back shut with snow when the snow plows come down your street. Also, before final cleanup of your driveway, check the road. If it does not appear to be clean or widened out, a plow will return to plow again, and will unavoidably push snow back into the entrance of your driveway. Holding off might keep you from clearing your driveway additional times on the same day. Even though the Street Department makes every effort to minimize the amount of snow deposited in driveways, there is no practical way to plow a street without leaving a windrow there. Please understand, under normal circumstances, the Street Department cannot go back and shovel or plow out the end of private driveways.

You pushed the street snow into my driveway, why can't I push it back into the street?

Please remember, the primary objective of Vernal City's snow removal effort is to provide reasonably safe roads upon which vehicles properly equipped for winter driving conditions may travel. Even setting the legality issues aside, anyone pushing or placing snow on or into the public right-of-way takes the risk of tremendous liability should they be the cause or contributing factor to an accident as those piles or berms freeze.

Can I park on the streets in the winter?

In order to run our snow plowing operations as efficiently as possible, we ask citizens to keep parked cars off streets as often as possible. Parked cars are an obstacle to clearing the street well, and also pose a hazard that plows must maneuver around. Your street will be plowed more thoroughly if there are fewer cars parked on the street. As per Vernal city ordinance Section 9.44.090 "No person shall park a vehicle on any street for a period of time longer than thirty (30) minutes during periods when streets are being snow plowed."

Why did you hit my mail box?

We do not "deliberately" knock over or damage mailboxes. Most mailboxes are not damaged by the vehicle itself but by the snow that is thrown from the plow. But, at times, with the combination of reduced visibility during a snow storm and snow banks, it is not always possible for our drivers to see a mailbox in time to avoid it. Remember, anything installed within the city's right-of-way (i.e., fence, mailbox etc.) is placed there at the owner's risk. Hence,

Residents are encouraged to place mailboxes at the maximum allowable distance from the pavement.

Why is that truck driving with its plow up?

The Vernal City Street Department staff is well trained and dedicated to plowing to keeping the roads open and passable. If a plow truck is riding with its' plow up, please do not be misled, they may be going for additional salt/sand mix, for fuel, driver change, or to the shop for repairs. Also if the storm is less than 4" they may be part of a sanding only operation as stated above.

How can I as a citizen help?

You can assist our equipment operators in several ways:

- Don't push driveway snow back into roads – place it on the down-stream/right side of the driveway or into the park strip where available.
- Always park your vehicle off of the street during snow and ice events.
- Once your street is plowed refrain from placing snow back into the street.

- Do not follow equipment too closely. Please be patient if you are required to wait behind a piece of snow removal equipment.
 - Make certain that your speed is reasonable for conditions.
 - Remain off the road during snowstorms unless absolutely necessary.
 - Do not allow children to make snow forts in snow piles or at the edge of the road
 - Please have patience. Snow plowing is a time consuming and arduous job covering approximately 45 miles of road. Some residents will have their roads plowed first and some will be last, but all city roads will be cleared
 - Please Buckle Up For Safety and enjoy our Winter Wonderland.
- If you have other problems with snow removal please contact Vernal City Public Works at [435-789-6924](tel:435-789-6924).