

City of St. Louis
Public Works Department
Snow Removal Program

The City of St. Louis Public Works Department is committed to providing safe, accessible streets during the winter months, yet mindful of keeping expenses in balance with the current budget appropriation. During normal snow removal operations, there are many areas that need attention and by comparison relatively few operators and equipment to meet these needs. These areas include State trunk lines, City major and local streets, downtown parking, City owned properties and cross walks, just to name a few. Since snow does not always come in convenient amounts or at an opportune time removal can quickly become a complicated endeavor. Our City Police Department has officers on duty 24-7-365 and closely monitors our winter road conditions. As these officers are patrolling the streets regularly, they provide us with first knowledge of road conditions during these snow and ice events. Should road safety issues arise, the officer on duty notifies the Public Works operator on call via the Gratiot County Central Dispatch to perform the needed maintenance. Public Works also monitors several weather report outlets allowing us to make preparations and plans based on the forecasts. Below, we have listed our general priorities, ordinances and policies with other helpful information to assist residents and travelers in working together with us to make winter driving a safer and less stressful experience for all.

Trunk line Roads

The City of St. Louis is contracted by the Michigan Department of Transportation to perform winter maintenance on the State-owned trunk lines of M-46 (Washington Street from the East City limit near Hubbard Street to the West City limit near Devon Drive) and on Business Route 127 (South Main Street from M-46 [Washington Street] to the South City limit near Jackson Road. These roads are considered our first priority as they are the main arterial routes in and out of the City for emergencies and to maintain intra-state traffic flow.

City Major Streets

City Major streets are the second priority as they help move traffic to and from locations in town and from local neighborhoods to the trunk lines and other entrances of the City.

Local Streets

Local streets are the third priority which help residents to and from their homes in the neighborhoods.

City Business District

The Public Works crew also clear the downtown business district area, including the adjacent parking lots and delivery alleys, for snowfalls of 2 inches and greater. The crews generally begin work between midnight and 2:00am to complete snow removal. This early start allows them to avoid early morning business traffic and to prepare public parking areas for customers. Plowing this area during high traffic times creates driving hazards for travelers and City employees alike. Beginning early ensures safer travel and shopping downtown and reduces the likelihood of accidents during snow removal operations. The crews typically pile snow in various areas downtown until they have time to haul it to the City snow storage lot. Yes, these snow piles are generally located in parking areas and on side streets which may take a few days to remove. Our intent is to open the majority of the area up to traffic as quickly as possible. Having our operators clearing and stockpiling allows them to concentrate on opening the roads first. Once this has been accomplished, they can load and haul the stockpiles to the City disposal site. If you encounter operators engaged in this process please be patient and maintain a safe distance while they move out of your way allowing you to pass.

Intersections & Dead Ends

After streets and downtown are completed the snow removal crew push back snow at intersections to improve visibility and access for pedestrians. The crews also clear dead ends of snow build up during plowing operations. Once these have been addressed, the cemetery roadway will be cleared.

City Residential Sidewalks

Residential sidewalks covered with snow and ice are to be cleared by the property owner at their expense, (Code of City ordinances section 54-14).

Mailbox damage

The City of St. Louis occasionally receives complaints that City snow removal operations have damaged a mailbox. Mailboxes incorrectly installed, such as those encroaching past the back of the curb, can be clipped by plows. Another problem encountered is when a mailbox gets hit by heavy snow thrown by the plows. In order to move snow from the road surface operators need to travel at speeds approaching 25

mph. Should you have a damaged mailbox please contact the Public Works Department for assistance at 989-681-3644. Personnel will inspect the damage and determine whether the mailbox was physical hit by the plow and for compliance with published USPS requirements. The City will only replace broken mailboxes and/or posts if it is found that they were **physically hit by City equipment and that these structures were properly located per USPS published requirements**. The City will not replace City damaged decorative, ornate, plastic or other styled mailboxes in kind. All mailboxes to be replaced by the City, as determined above, will be replaced with a plain steel unit and, if the post is broken, a new plain 4x4 post. Should the City determine that there is no evidence of a **direct hit by City equipment** any replacement responsibility will be the property owners alone. The City of St. Louis created this policy in a good faith effort to take care of any operator error issues of unavoidable damage done in diligent snow removal operations.

Driveway plowing

Residents should keep in mind that snow plows are designed to remove snow from the travel lanes by pushing it off the edge of the road. It is normal and likely that the plow will leave a windrow of snow in front of driveways after the street is plowed. Property owners are responsible to clear this windrow should they wish. Snow plowed from a driveway may not be plowed into the street at any time.

Winter street parking

Overnight parking on a City street is not permitted to allow snow plowing operations and street clearing. (City Ordinance Section 62-20)

Salt and sand applications

The City uses common rock salt or liquid sodium chloride brine for ice and snow operations. These chemicals are commonly used between the temperatures of 32 degrees down to as low as 10 degrees for street clearing and pre-treating pavement to reduce ice buildup on the roadway. Salt products such as these are water soluble and have been used for decades for winter maintenance. The City uses modern salt spreaders with calibrated application controls to apply salt economically with good stewardship of our waterways always in mind. Rock salt is purchased through the State of Michigan Mi-Deal contract to obtain the best pricing.

Sand is another common product applied to roads for traction improvement and other plant based products are also being used to a small degree. The City does NOT use sand or other biological products for extra traction due to the high cost of their cleanup. Sand and biological product residuals build up on the edge of the road, covering the

pavement edge, inhibiting drainage and settling in storm drains. A national study estimated that the removal of a single ton of winter maintenance sand can approach \$100,000 to completely remove from drains and roads. This cost would consume road funds that are currently used for pavement maintenance and road reconstruction projects. The Public Works Department continually monitors new developments in technology to evaluate them for any benefit or cost savings to our program.

A few final items

- The Public Works snow removal crew is made up of employees from Public Works, Water Department, Waste Water Department and Electric Department with assistance from our Police Department. Our men work long hours at any time of day or night in some difficult situations to do their best to make clear safe roads a reality for everyone.
- If our plowing is running later than you hoped, please remember that when up against Mother Nature we are all outnumbered.
- When you see City plow trucks working stay back a safe distance as visibility in a plow truck can be limited due to blowing snow and the driver having many obstacles to keep track of.
- Please help keep snow shoveled away from fire hydrants and storm drains. Remember the fire or flood could be at your house!
- If you have concerns or see a hazardous situation please call Public Works at 989-681-3644. If you get the answering machine please leave a message we will return your call asap.
- If you see our guys on the street give a friendly wave or nod. We are all in this together!