

CITY OF RED LAKE FALLS

SNOWPLOWING AND ICE CONTROL POLICY

Policy Adopted: 4-10-2017

Amended: 2-08-2021

Introduction

The City of Red Lake Falls, Minnesota, finds that it is in the best interest of the residents of the city to assume basic responsibility for control of snow and ice on city streets. Reasonable ice and snow control is necessary for routine travel and emergency services. The city will attempt to provide such control in a safe and cost effective manner, keeping in mind safety, budget, personnel, and environmental concerns. The city will use city employees, equipment and/or private contractors to provide this service. This policy does not relieve the operator of private vehicles, pedestrians, property owners, residents and all others that may be using public streets, of their responsibility to act in a reasonable, prudent and cautious manner, given the prevailing street conditions.

When Will the City Start Snow or Ice Control Operations?

The Street Superintendent will decide when to begin snow or ice control operations. The criteria for that decision are:

1. Snow accumulation of three (3) inches or more;
2. Drifting of snow that causes problems for travel.
3. Icy conditions which seriously affect travel; and
4. Time of snowfall in relationship to heavy use of streets.

Snow and ice control operations are expensive and involve the use of limited personnel and equipment. Consequently, snowplowing operations will not generally be conducted for snowfall of less than three (3) inches.

How Snow will be Plowed

Snow will be plowed in a manner so as to minimize traffic obstructions. The center of the roadway will be plowed first. The snow shall then be pushed from left to right on two-way streets. On one-way streets or where there is a center boulevard, snow may be pushed in either direction. The discharge shall go onto the boulevard area of the street. In times of extreme snowfall, streets will not always immediately be able to be completely cleared of snow.

Snow Removal

The Street Superintendent will determine if and when snow will be removed from the area by truck. Such snow removal will occur in areas where there is no room on the boulevard for snow storage and in areas where accumulated piles of snow create a hazardous condition. Snow removal operations will not commence until other snowplowing operations have been completed. Snow removal operations may also be delayed depending on weather conditions, personnel and budget availability. The snow will be removed and hauled to a snow storage area. The snow storage area will be located so as to minimize environmental problems.

Priorities and Schedule of Streets to be Plowed

The city has classified city streets based on the street function, traffic volume and importance to the welfare of the community.

1. Those streets classified as “Snow Plow Routes” will be plowed first. These are high volume routes, which connect major sections of the city and provide access for emergency fire, police, and medical services.
2. The second priority streets are those streets providing access to schools and commercial businesses.
3. The third priority streets are low volume residential streets.
4. The fourth priority areas are alleys and city parking lots and city sidewalks.

During significant and severe storms, the city must be prepared to move personnel and equipment to maintain priority routes first. In fulfilling the need to have all priority streets safe and passable, when resources are limited, plowing of all other streets may be stopped at any time so resources can be shifted to priority routes.

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, assistance to emergency response vehicles, equipment breakdown, and personnel shortages.

Winter Parking Ordinance

No person shall stop, stand, or park any vehicle or permit it to stand on any street in any of the following places at any of the following times between November 1st and April 15th; both dates inclusive.

1. On Main Street between the hours of 2:00 a.m. to 6:00 a.m. on any day;
2. On the North and West sides of the streets and avenues on odd numbered days from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 a.m. the next day.
3. On the South and East sides of all streets and avenues on even numbered days from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 a.m. the next day.
4. In any alley of the City between the hours of 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 a.m. the next day.
5. On any other street as determined by the City Council and indicated by appropriately posted signs.

Work Schedule for Snowplow Operators

Snowplow operators will be expected to work their assigned shifts. In severe snow emergencies, operators sometimes have to work longer shifts, but will be paid overtime for hours in excess of 40 per week, or pursuant to any collective bargaining contract language. However, because of budget and safety concerns, no operator shall work more than a twelve-hour shift in any twenty-four hour period. While work breaks are not guaranteed, generally operators will take breaks in accordance with city policy, provided the breaks do not interfere with city services or operations. In addition, operators will be allowed sufficient time to eat a meal during any shift which is eight or more hours, or as provided in the collective bargaining agreement. After a twelve-hour shift, the operators will be replaced if additional qualified personnel are available.

Traffic Regulations

The city recognizes that snowplow operators are exempt from traffic regulations set forth in Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 169 while actually engaged in work on streets, except for regulations related to driving while impaired and the safety of school children. Pursuant to this authority, snowplow operators engaged in snow removal or ice control on city streets have discretion to disregard traffic laws set forth in Chapter 169, except for laws relating to impaired driving and school children safety, when in their judgment, it is safe to disregard such laws. The privileges granted herein to operators of snow removal and ice control vehicles shall apply only if the vehicle is equipped with one lighted lamp displaying a flashing, oscillating, or rotating amber light placed in such a position on the vehicle as to be visible throughout an arc of 360 degrees.

Weather Conditions

Snow and ice control operations will be conducted only 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.

Use of Sand, Salt, and Other Chemicals

The city will use sand, salt, and other chemicals when there are hazardous ice or slippery conditions. The city is concerned about the effect of such chemicals on the environment and will limit its use for that reason.

Sidewalks

The city will maintain some of the sidewalks in the city. The list of those sidewalks is attached. As there are a limited number of personnel available, the city will only maintain these sidewalks after the streets have been plowed. It is the responsibility of the resident and/or property owner to remove all accumulated snow from all other sidewalks along public streets adjoining their property. This includes any snow plowed from public streets onto the sidewalk.

List of sidewalks the city will maintain:

- Champagne Avenue – both sides from 1st to 7th Streets
- International Drive – south side from Champagne Ave SW to Main Ave S
- Hwy 32 – both sides from 1st Street SW to St. John's Avenue SE
- Hwy 32 – east side from 1st Street SW to Bridge Street
- Hwy 32 – south side from Bridge Street NE to Hamilton Avenue NE
- Hamilton Avenue – east side from Hwy 32 to 2nd Street NE
- Hamilton Avenue – west side from 2nd Street to 1st Street NE
- Broadway Avenue – west side from Hwy 32 to 7th Street NE

Placing Snow or Ice on Public Streets or City Property

It is unlawful for any person not acting under contract with the City to remove snow or ice from private property, such as driveways and sidewalks, and place in such quantity or manner as to cause a hazard to travel on public streets without proper arrangements for the immediate removal. It is unlawful for any person not acting under contract with the City to place or deposit any snow or ice upon city property.

It is the responsibility of the resident to clean snow from the following areas: driveway approaches, around trash cans, mailboxes, and newspaper tubes. Residents are also encouraged to “adopt” any fire hydrant located near their property to ensure clear access by the fire department.

Other Snow Related Concerns

In the process of plowing snow, crew members at times do inadvertently allow the plow to “climb” the curb and disturb the sod. This is especially true in late fall/early spring plowing, and in cul-de-sac areas. If sod is damaged, property owners are responsible for minor repairs. If damage is excessive, residents should call the city to report the damage.

Mailboxes

Damage to a mailbox is a risk that snowplow operators face during their winter plowing requirements. Mailboxes that are physically hit or damaged by city snowplows will be repaired by the city. Mailboxes knocked down by the weight of the snow thrown from the plow are considered the owner’s responsibility to replace. The city will conduct a review of each mailbox damage claim to determine whether the city has any legal responsibility for the damage and if so, to replace or provide reimbursement for the mailbox.

If the city, in its discretion, determines that reimbursement or replacement is appropriate, the city may:

1. At the mailbox owner’s request, replace the mailbox with a standard size, non-decorative metal mailbox and replace the support post as necessary with a 4’ x 4’, decay resistance wood support post, both which will be installed by the city;
2. Provide reimbursement in a reasonable amount for the mailbox and support posts that meet the city’s ordinance standards, as well as state and federal requirements for mailbox size, support and placement.

Complaint Procedure

Complaints will be recorded on telephone logs. Calls requiring service will be transferred to a work request and forwarded to the appropriate supervisor for scheduling. Emergency complaints will be handled in an expeditious manner as resources are available.

Deviation from Policy

The Superintendent of Streets may deviate from this policy when in his or her judgment it is in the best interest of the city or is necessary because of budget needs or other circumstances. Changes in priorities (lasting more than 4 hours) will be documented as to what caused such actions, why the change was necessary, and for how long the change is to be in effect. Those city employees and/or contractors affected will be notified immediately by radio or cell phone of such changes with all communications logged. Information logged will include the time and date of the communication, name of employee contacted, and how they were contacted. Any changes of priorities lasting more than 24 hours should be made in a written record and the public should be informed of such changes through normal methods used by the city for emergency notifications.

Review and Modification of Policy

The Street Superintendent shall keep on file all comments and complaints received regarding this policy. The policy will be reviewed periodically. Any review will consider comments and complaints since the last review and any other factors affecting the policy or its implementation.