

# **Otero County Snow and Ice Control Policy**

*Approved by the Board of County Commissioners on May 28, 2020*

The removal of snow and ice from the county's roadways is one of the most important jobs confronting the Road Shop during the winter months. The safety and comfort of the public shall at all times be the primary consideration of all county maintenance personnel. Snow and ice removal operations must be conducted in such a manner so as to provide the safest, most economical means of opening the county's highway system within a reasonable amount of time after each winter storm event.

The following Policy has been established to provide guidelines for the public and for plow operators to follow in order to ensure consistent practices for snow and ice removal during winter storm events. Deviations from this policy are at the discretion of the road superintendent on a case-by-case basis.

Otero County does not have a bare road policy and does not assure a completely bare road. Entire sections of roadway are not usually salted. Drivers are reminded to exercise caution and drive with care. The legal speed limit may not be possible at all times.

## *Dispatch of Snow Plows*

The decision to plow or sand will be made by the Road Shop Superintendent or Maintenance Supervisor based on the following guidelines:

- The County will dispatch plows after the significant part of the snowfall or wind has stopped, except (a) in an emergency or other special circumstances or (b) when conditions allow reasonable accomplishments to be made.
- The County will remove snow on bituminous-surfaced roads when we receive appreciable accumulations, generally 1 to 2 inches. One inch of wet heavy snow or two inches of light snow will be used as a general rule of thumb.
- The County will remove snow on gravel roads when accumulations exceed four (4) inches. Gravel roads will not be plowed in early season until snow pack has been formed.
- The County will perform ice-control measures when icy conditions seriously affect travel.

## *Hours of Operation*

Otero County is staffed for one shift of snow and ice removal. During a snowstorm, the necessary personnel and equipment will be mobilized by the Maintenance Supervisor. Any deviation from the start time must be approved by the Road Shop Superintendent or Maintenance Supervisor. The normal weekday early start time during a snowstorm is between 5:00 a.m. and 6:00 a.m. Weekends and holidays will receive a reduced level of service due to lower traffic volumes and the limited resources available. Operator duty shifts are generally limited to a maximum of twelve hours per day for safety reasons. Therefore, most routes will have no coverage between 5:00 p.m. and 5:00 a.m.

Operations will be halted when: (a) service levels are reached; (b) coverage time has elapsed; (c) conditions are too hazardous; or (d) reasonable accomplishments cannot be made.

## *Operations*

Generally, the following three phases will be used in snow removal operations:

1. Make the roads passable. Clean one lane in each direction.
2. Widen the lanes to edge of shoulders and apply abrasive-chemical mixture. The County will perform sanding operations at problem areas, including curves, hills, intersections, and bridges. Otero County does not assure a completely bare road and will not typically sand entire sections of highways.

A blend of 50/50 salt to cinders is generally used in sanding operations. This is modified as the temperature and conditions warrant. Salt use will be limited at temperatures below 20° F as salt is ineffective below that temperature.

Gravel roads shall not be plowed to a bare surface or sanded unless directed by the Road Shop Superintendent or Maintenance Supervisor.

3. Clean up. Remove ice and slush off roadway after salt and sun have been allowed to work.

Depending upon the situation, more than one phase may be accomplished at a time.

### *Plowing Priorities*

It is the goal of the Road Shop to serve the majority of the public in the quickest way possible. Roads with higher traffic volumes will typically receive higher priority. The following are the priorities plow operators will strive to adhere to:

1. County bituminous-surfaced roads, starting with high collection areas close to town and working out towards rural areas thereafter.
2. County gravel-surfaced roads.
3. Township roads (unorganized town roads and those done on a contract basis).

### *Personal Property*

Mailboxes, fences, and other items damaged during snow and ice removal are evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Only those items that were damaged by actual contact with county equipment will be repaired at the county's expense. The Road Shop does not provide special mailbox installations or decorative designs. Damaged supports will be replaced with the Road Shop's swing-away type support. Any mailbox that is repaired or replaced by the Road Shop does not imply a change of ownership. The County is not liable for damages to fences, vehicles, or other objects placed on its right-of-way.