



# Snow Season Frequently Asked Questions

## When is the City in “snow operations”?

The City designates snow season operations as **November 15 to March 15**. However, you never know what Mother Nature is going to do and crews always respond as needed outside of these dates.

## What are the criteria for starting to plow?

There are **several factors that go into snow response**. If just a couple of inches of snow falls and the forecast and conditions indicate it’s not going to melt, most likely plows will start working the priority arterials and priority routes.

## What are the priorities for snow plowing?

**Arterials, hills, hospital and school routes are the first priority** when plowing. It is common that snow fall continues for several hours and plows need to return to these priority routes before they can start plowing neighborhoods.



## What are the criteria for a Full-City plow?

Street Department leadership and crews are **constantly monitoring conditions throughout the City along with the weather**. The biggest factor

is the amount of snow that is forecasted. The type of snow matters too. Some storms are light and fluffy, others are heavy and wet. Generally, a forecast of 4 inches throughout the day or back to back storms will lead to a Full-City plow.

## What is the difference between street maintenance and full-city snow response operations?

When it snows, crews will plow all the streets, including residential. This is done as part of a regular work day, weekdays, utilizing additional Public Works department staff to support the plowing. If a Full-City plow is needed, crews move to 24-hour operations and 12-hour shifts for drivers until all 2,000 lane miles have been plowed at least once.

## How long does it take to do a Full-City plow?

The City cross trains other Public Works employees from the Water and Wastewater departments so we have enough people available to do a full-city plow or to fill in for crew members when needed. Typically, once crews move into Full-City operations, **it takes 3 days to plow the over 2,000 lane miles**. This can change if temperatures rise, it rains, snow is heavy or more snow is forecasted.

## What materials does the City use for deicing?

Mag-chloride is a **liquid substance the City uses to pre-treat streets** in advance of snow, rain, or fog that may become slick as weather changes. Ice-Kicker is a **granular substance crews may use to melt some ice** that develops on arterials and hills. Sometimes crews pre-treat with Mag-Chloride and then spread Ice-Kicker later. This allows both substances to melt the ice from below and above.



## What is salt and sand used for?

A mixture of salt and sand is also used as an effective **tool for traction and street maintenance**. Depending on the conditions, salt and sand can be the best tool for traction.

## What does a plow driver do on a typical shift?

Plow drivers prepare their trucks to go out when their shift begins. This includes **assessing the equipment, putting on chains, checking wipers and the plow blade, and making sure they have the needed materials like sand, salt, and deicer**.





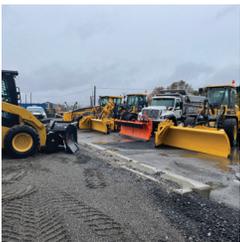
### What do crews do when it isn't snowing?

The street department maintains streets in any weather. Winter conditions include freeze-thaw patterns that cause potholes and crews use a specialized

hot-patch truck to fill them year around. Crews are also performing maintenance on equipment, participating in trainings, clearing streets of debris and more!

### How much does it cost the City for snow plow services?

We get this question often. There are **several variables that go into the cost of maintaining streets** during the winter. Weather is different every year and we won't know how much plowing or street-treating materials will be needed. The type of maintenance is completely weather-dependent and dictates how many staff hours are needed throughout a season. Fuel prices, material costs, equipment prices and repairs also change from year to year.



### How many snowplows does the City have? The City has different pieces of equipment to clear snow depending on the conditions.

Heavy trucks with plows and equipment that treat streets

with liquid deicer, sand, salt, and granular deicer makes up the majority of the fleet. Additionally, graders and skidsteers are used for other types of snow removal.

### What do I do if my street was missed?

If your street was missed, please call 311 and they will forward it to the street department. **Cul-de-sacs require a different type of equipment** and are on a separate route schedule than regular streets.

### What is "snow fluffing"?

Sometimes after a large snowfall, the **temperature will rise above freezing causing the snow to expand** and "fluff up". This increases the weight of the snow, which increases the amount of time it takes to plow. It can also give the appearance that a street hasn't been plowed.



### Who is responsible for clearing sidewalks?

Per City of Spokane Municipal Code, **property owners are responsible for clearing the sidewalk or walkway** in front of their home or business. It is requested that a 36" path be cleared by 9 a.m. the morning after a snow fall when possible.

### What if I am unable to clear my sidewalk?

We encourage residents to **connect with neighbors to see who may need help and coordinate a plan** to support residents who need assistance with snow removal. Service organizations and the faith community are good to connect with as well.

### I parked on the odd-numbered side of the street, and there is a berm next to my car. Why?

The reason it is suggested to park on the odd-numbered side of the street is to **give plows the maximum width of the street**.