



A WORD ABOUT WINTER IN MOUNT VERNON

Snow and ice removal is an annual operation which varies in cost each year. When the City of Mount Vernon Street Department began the use of rock salt, it was always mixed with sand or gravel to extend the supply as much as possible. In 1998, the City began purchasing electronic salt spreading systems so that salt could be used efficiently without mixing anything with it. Some mixing is still done as conditions or salt supply require it. The City of Mount Vernon Street Department maintains approximately 92 road miles. The Street Department has seven trucks available to apply rock salt to city streets.

Winter traveling can, at times, be quite challenging for drivers; it is a challenge, as well, for the City of Mount Vernon in its battle against Mother Nature. As you can imagine, keeping miles of roadways and bridges safe and passable is a large task. Street Department employees work hard to treat the roads even in the worst weather conditions.

Since life does go on, even in the snow, most businesses and schools attempt to continue their operations. That is why the City of Mount Vernon makes safety of the traveling public its first concern during snow and ice storms.

The City of Mount Vernon usually experiences an annual snowfall of 25 to 35 inches. The severity of winter storms determines to a large extent the methods we must use to keep our streets clear of snow and ice and the relative effectiveness of those efforts. Nevertheless, those who may not be fully aware of or understand its operation sometimes question its efforts. Some questions about our snow removal program recur. We've listed those below and tried to answer them in ways we hope you'll find beneficial.

Why Does A Truck Move So Slowly While Plowing Snow And Spreading Salt?

The driver must adjust his or her vehicle speed according to various weather conditions. If traveling too fast, salt will not stay on the road. Before you decide to pass a truck, ask yourself, "Is this pass really necessary?" Passing a snow plow truck can be extremely dangerous. There is never a safe time to pass, but if you must, do it with extreme caution.

What Is A Safe Distance To Follow Behind A Snow Plow Truck?

The normal safe following distance between two vehicles (two-second rule) should be doubled during inclement weather. When following a truck, your headlights should be on low beam. And remember every truck has blind spots, which reduce side and rear visibility. In addition, following too closely increases your chances of loose material flying up and hitting your vehicle.

Is It True That Bridges Freeze Before Road Surfaces?

Yes, because the air below bridges tends to cool the bridge faster than the normal road surface. Also, be cautious of shaded areas that do not receive sunlight and drifted areas along the road.

What Is Black Ice?

Black ice is a thin layer of transparent ice not always visible on the roadway but very slippery.

When Does The City Remove Snow?

As it begins to accumulate. First, we concentrate on major streets, bridges, hills, hazardous intersections and school areas. Then, attention is given to residential areas.

Why Do Residential Areas Get Plowed Last?

The City of Mount Vernon must keep major streets open to allow public transportation and emergency vehicles a way to get to all parts of the City. As soon as we are certain major streets, hills, and bridges are clear, equipment is immediately moved into residential areas.

How Much Equipment Is Plowing At Any One Time?

The City of Mount Vernon keeps four to six vehicles on the road at all times during severe weather. If an extended winter storm is expected, we will schedule rotating 12-hour shifts and plow around the clock to try and stay ahead of the weather, or at least, keep up.

How Much Salt Do The Crews Use?

Anywhere from 1000 to 1500 tons, depending on conditions. The City of Mount Vernon makes every attempt to reduce salt usage where possible. Not only because of its high cost, but also for ecological reasons. It damages trees and runs off into our streams. When the temperature drops below 20 degrees, salt becomes less and less effective. It is dormant at zero or below and does little or no good.

Why Are Some Residential Streets Always Plowed First?

Drivers try to use different routines when plowing the side streets in their area of responsibility. That way no street is always cleared first or always last.

Why Do The Plows Push Snow Onto The Sidewalks And Into Driveways?

Snow and ice must be removed from the street so emergency vehicles such as Fire, Paramedics, and Police can get through, when needed, and so water from melting snow can run into storm sewers when a thaw comes. Unfortunately, no one has found a way to remove snow without pushing it off to the side of the road, onto sidewalks and driveways.

Yet I'm Supposed To Keep The Sidewalk In Front Of My House Clear Of Ice And Snow?

Yes, it's supposed to be cleared after a snowfall. Otherwise, children going to school, the elderly, anyone ... can slip and be badly injured.

What About The Snow Emergency Parking Ordinance?

It is in effect when the Safety Service Director declares a snow emergency. This allows the City snowplow crews to better clear the roadways. It also allows passage by emergency vehicles. Streets designated for snow emergency parking bans have the appropriate signs placed along them. Please observe any signs posted on your street. Everyone, where at all possible, is urged to remove their cars from the street altogether. This allows snowplow crews to clear the street better without the added fear of striking someone's car.

BE A SMART DRIVER.

Leave early, and expect any trip to take twice as long as normal.

Plan your route to avoid steep upgrades and lightly traveled roads where deep snow or drifts have a chance to form.

Slow down. Slick pavements mean reduced traction and loss of control. On snow or ice, there is no way the posted speed limit is a safe speed.

Increase following distance. It can take from three to ten times farther to stop on winter-slick pavements than on a dry road. Therefore, you must allow a much larger gap between yourself and the car ahead of you. Stop gradually by pumping your brakes and using your transmission to slow down. Never slam on your brakes in ice or snow.

STAY OFF THE ROAD WHEN TRAVELER'S WARNINGS ARE ISSUED.

When police and weather officials issue winter storm alerts, they mean business, and they are talking to you. If you are at work and road conditions suddenly become impassable, stay where you are. As much as you might want to get home, you won't accomplish a thing by getting yourself stuck in a snowdrift halfway there. And don't bet your life on a four-wheel drive vehicle. In a full-scale blizzard, you are not much better off than someone in a conventional car is.

WINTERIZE YOUR CAR BEFORE THE SNOW STARTS TO FLY.

A Great many motorists find themselves stuck or stranded each winter because of car trouble that could have been avoided by simple preventive maintenance.

Sometimes there is no way to stay out of trouble on icy winter roads, but many drivers who wind up waiting for a tow truck or a rescue team have no one to blame but themselves.

Okay... Who Do I Call If I Have A Problem With Snow Removal?

Call the City of Mount Vernon Street Department at (740) 393-9501.

Is There Anything I Can Do To Help Us Make It Through The Winter?

You bet. First, try to keep your car off the street. If you cannot, please observe the snow emergency no parking signs when in effect. Second, if there is a snow emergency, don't drive unless absolutely necessary. And finally, even though we've supplied phone numbers to take calls on snow removal, try not to call unless it's a real emergency. Your street will be plowed as quickly as possible. Thank you for your understanding. We hope you've found this information interesting and helpful.