



# **RUSK COUNTY HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT**

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## **Rusk County Highway Department WINTER MAINTENANCE MANUAL Scott R. Emch, PE – Highway Commissioner**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This policy and procedure presents a detailed overview of snow and ice control operations. It also contains the goals and objectives of these operations and can be reviewed by the county's elected representatives in the area of snow removal and ice control.

All snow and ice control operations are considered emergency in nature because public safety is involved. Consequently, regardless of the time of day or day of the week, the work is accomplished as expeditiously as possible. In order to achieve this level of service, long range planning and equipment readiness are undertaken by the maintenance section and supervisory sections of the Highway Department. Short range operational planning is done by these sections every time the weather forecasts indicate a potential for adverse weather.

Short term advance preparation is often difficult because of the infinite variety of conditions that can occur during the long snow and ice season. The rate and accumulation of snowfall, moisture content, temperature during and after a storm, pavement temperature, wind direction and velocity during and after the storm, duration of the storm, time of day or night as well as day of the week, and intervals between storms all interact to make each storm unique in many aspects. Therefore, while a plan exists and there is a standard method of operation, there must be enough flexibility within the plan to provide for any difference or contingency as it arises.

Generally, the greater the snow accumulation, the greater the problem and the more complicated the operational response becomes to assure proper clearance of the roads. However, a snow plan based on snow depth alone would be too simplistic to be effective. For example, a rapid rate of snow accumulation can close roads before plows can get to them. High winds can quickly cause drifting and block roads. Continued wind can make re-plowing of already cleared roads necessary. Heavy, wet snow is harder for plows to push than light dry snow; therefore it takes longer to complete the operation. Timing and temperature can also complicate the operation. A storm during a weekday rush hour is harder to combat than one which occurs early on a weekend day simply because of traffic patterns and congestion. A moderate snowfall on warm pavements may melt quickly when salt is applied. However, a comparable snowfall in inches during sub zero weather may require a plowing and several applications of de-icing material (salt or calcium chloride) before satisfactory road conditions are achieved.

All of these factors need to be considered when formulating plans for each and every snow and ice control operation and again when evaluating the effectiveness of a specific operation and the effect any operation had on minimizing a storm's impact on the county.

With all these thoughts in mind, the following are the goals and objectives of the **Rusk County Highway Department's** snow and ice control operations.

### **OBJECTIVES**

1. To minimize hazards of slippery road conditions to motorists through tried and proven methods of snow and ice control on county roads.
2. To reduce economic losses to the county and industry caused by workers and Commercial enterprises not being able to get to their jobs, or to make deliveries.
3. To facilitate handling of emergencies by fire, sheriff and police activities in winter months.
4. To restore traveling conditions for the convenience of the general public to normal as soon as possible after each winter storm event.
5. To achieve "passable roadways" within the limitations imposed by weather conditions and available resources.

### **ROAD CLASSIFICATION**

For snow and ice control purposes, there are four classes of road, which are maintained at different levels under the County's winter road maintenance policy. These are listed in priority order as follows:

State Highway – US HWY 8, WIS 27, 40, & 73.

Major County Trunks - County "G", County "A", County "O", County "D"  
East, County "I" south of Highway 8 to Highway 27.

Other County Trunks – All other County Trunk Roads.

Town Roads – Any roads designated to be plowed for Townships by County Highway Personnel.

### **GENERAL**

Purpose: To define the level of effort expectations for winter maintenance during a winter storm event. One of the goals of winter maintenance is to achieve "passable roadways" within the limitations imposed by climatologically conditions, the availability of resources, and environmental concerns during a winter storm event.

### **PASSABLE ROADWAY DEFINITION**

A "Passable Roadway" is defined as a roadway surface that is free from drifts, snow ridges and as much ice and snow pack as is practical and can be traveled safely at *reasonable speeds*. A passable roadway should not be confused with a "dry pavement" or "bare pavement" which is essentially free of all ice, snow

and any free moisture from shoulder to shoulder. This “dry/bare pavement” conditions may not exist until the weather conditions improve to the point where this pavement condition can be provided.

The definition of “reasonable speed” is considered a speed that a vehicle can travel without losing traction. During and immediately after a winter storm event, a reasonable speed will most likely be lower than the posted speed limit. Motorists can expect some inconvenience and will be expected to modify their driving practices to suit road conditions.

## **LEVEL OF SERVICE**

1. Maintenance crews will strive to keep the roads “passable” during the storm and from 4 AM to 10 PM. After the storm, during normal working hours of 7 AM to 3:30 PM, all lanes will have clear pavement as soon as possible. The shoulders shall be cleaned up but remain white after the storm. Between storm ending and the time clear pavement is achieved, only wheel tracks may be provided.
2. Maintenance crews will strive to keep the roads passable during the storm and from 4 AM to 7 PM. Between 7 PM and 4 AM roads shall remain open for travel. Motorists should expect significantly reduced travel conditions. After the storm clear pavement as soon as possible during normal work hours of 7 AM to 3:30 PM. (Applicable to CTH “G”, “A”, “O”, “D” East, “I” South of Hwy 27)
3. Crews will strive to provide passable pavement with white shoulders between 4 AM and 7 PM. Between 7 PM and 4 AM roads shall be kept open for travel, however, the motorist should expect significantly reduced travel conditions. (Applicable for all County Trunks other than “G”, “A”, “O”, “D” East, and “I” South to Hwy 27)
4. Cleared to two lanes open within 36 hours after storm during normal working hours 7 AM to 3:30 PM. (Applicable to Town Roads)

## **GENERAL POLICY**

Plowing begins when snow accumulates to 2”, it is still snowing, and the forecast is for two or more inches. Earlier implementation of a maintenance policy may be necessary if combined with freezing and icing conditions, occurrence of an ice storm or freezing rain.

Plowing of snow will be limited in storms in the fall and late spring on gravel roads, due to the lack of frost to support the snowplow. Plowing may be limited on paved roads during the spring thaw. Operation may be suspended or reduced if:

1. Qualified operators are not available.
2. Equipment breakdowns.

Operators of snow equipment shall not perform work of greater than fourteen hours per day, plus 2 hours for emergency show up, as regulated by the Commercial Drivers License rules of Wisconsin.

## **INFORMATION**

Information about road conditions and operations can be obtained from the Rusk County Highway Department at 715-532-2633 during regular office hours of 7 AM to 3:30 PM. After hours call the Wisconsin Highway Patrol at 1-800-ROADWIS.

## **DRIVEWAYS**

Blocked driveways from snowplows:

The County does not have any obligation to clean the snow out of driveways. If possible do not plow your driveway until the snowplow has gone by. State Statute prohibits plowing any snow from driveways onto State, County, or Town Roads. You are liable for fines and damages. If you hire someone to plow your driveway, be sure they know about this policy.

## **MAIL BOXES**

Operators are instructed to be very cautious near mailboxes. In most cases a properly installed mailbox will permit a snowplow to clear under it. Most cases of damaged mail boxes are caused by heavy snow hitting the box. The mailboxes are not usually hit by the plow. **Mailbox owners may file claim against the County per Wisconsin State Statutes Chapter 893.**

By Order of the Rusk County Highway Commissioner  
Scott R. Emch, PE