Snow and Ice Policies and Procedures

Town of Ashburnham: Operational Policies
Highway Division

MISSION STATEMENT:

The objective at the Town of Ashburnham DPW is to remove snow and ice from the roadways as safely, quickly, efficiently, and cost effectively as possible to restore normal traffic conditions and services to the residents of Ashburnham. It is our goal to obtain safe and drivable road conditions at the earliest practical time following the conclusion of a winter storm. Each and every storm is different, and this policy is used as a guideline to assist management in making well-informed judgmental decisions in a consistent manner for each event requiring snow and ice removal.

Winter Parking Ban

In accordance with Section 5-5 of the Ashburnham General Bylaws – NO ALL NIGHT PARKING (WINTER SEASON):

No person shall allow, permit or suffer any vehicle registered in his name, other than one acting in an emergency, to be parked on any street for a period of time longer than one (1) hour between the hours of 12:00 MIDNIGHT and 5:00 a.m. from November 15th to April 1st. Parking Fine: $50.00 per offense

This parking ban allows the DPW to plow and open roads in a more efficient and timely manner.

Illegally Parked Vehicles

Illegally parked vehicles are the biggest obstacles to effectively removing snow from the roadway. Vehicles that violate the winter parking ban will be ticketed by the police and carry a $50.00 fine. Vehicles that directly hamper DPW snow removal efforts will be ticketed and towed at the owner's expense. Your cooperation with the parking ban will be greatly appreciated.

Questions regarding parking restrictions should be referred to either the Ashburnham Police Department of the Ashburnham DPW. You may contact the DPW Monday through Friday, between the hours of 7:00am and 3:00pm at 978-827-4120.

Snow Plowing Operations

The following is a general description of Ashburnham's snow removal plan. As you are aware, each storm is different, but we try to follow our snow removal policy as closely as possible. **Our Snow and Ice Removal Program entails three (3) steps:**

1. **The Beginning of a Snow Storm**
2. **During the Snow Storm**
3. **Following the Snow Storm**

Step One

When a snowstorm begins, the DPW responds by salting the main roads, and sanding the hills and bus routes. Salting and sanding these roadways serves two main purposes: it prevents the snow from bonding and compacting to the pavement and it keeps traffic moving.

Step Two

Plowing operations begin when at least two (2) to four (4) inches of snow accumulates on the ground. Thirteen DPW vehicles are equipped for plowing and four private contractors are called in to assist with snow removal operations. Each vehicle is assigned to pre-determined routes and will remain in this pattern until the storm subsides. The main objective during the snowstorm is to keep roadways passable. At the end of the storm, the plows begin to widen out all roads by pushing back the amassed snow to the edge of the pavement. Residents may want to wait until the roads have been widened out before clearing the entrance of their driveways. If snow needs to be pushed back further due to heavy build-up on the side of the road, the DPW has three (3) days after a storm in which to do so.

Please be advised that snow must not be shoveled or plowed "back into the street" from a resident's driveway (Town Bylaw Chapter 11, Section 7). This creates a hazard to traffic and requires our staff to return to clean it up at the resident's expense. This action could result in a $75.00 fine.

The DPW staff are well trained and dedicated to plow "around the clock," if necessary, keeping the roads open and passable. If a plow truck is riding with its' plow up, please do not be mislead. They may be returning to the garage for fuel, repairs, or going to a different area of town.

Residents should not be concerned if they do not see their roadway plowed during the early part of a snowstorm. The DPW follows an assigned route plan where main roads

and hills are plowed first. Just please be patient, all Town owned roads will eventually be plowed.

Another area of concern is mailboxes. We do not deliberately knock over or damage mailboxes. Most mailboxes are not damaged by the vehicle itself but by the snow that is thrown from the plow. But, at times, with the combination of reduced visibility and snow banks, it is not always possible for our drivers to see a mailbox in time to avoid it. Remember, anything installed within the town's right-of-way (i.e., fence, mailbox, etc.) is placed there at the owner's risk. Hence, residents are encouraged to place mailboxes at the maximum allowable distance from the pavement.

Please be aware that the DPW will make every attempt to repair mailboxes damaged during snow plowing operations. Mailboxes should be inspected regularly to insure that they are secured properly and that wood posts are not rotted out.

An additional dilemma that is of concern is basketball hoops that border town roads. All basketball hoops must be removed for the time period of November 30th until April 1st. These hoops are tough to see when it is snowing and are capable of snagging our plow trucks. In the event that this happens and damage is caused to the vehicle, the owner may be held responsible for the damage. So **please** take the time to remove basketball hoops from the roadway. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

Step Three

Once the snowfall has stopped and all roads are cleared of snow, post-storm sanding and salting commences. All roads are again sanded and salted to improve traction and melt the remaining snow and ice.

Residents Can Help

Residents can assist the DPW during a snowstorm by heeding these suggestions:

1. Observe all winter parking bans.
2. Reduce your speed and drive cautiously. Keep your headlights on at all times during a snowstorm.
3. Remain off the road during snowstorms unless absolutely necessary.
4. Do not allow children to make snow forts at the edge of the road.
5. Do not plow, blow or throw snow back into the roadway.
6. Before final cleanup of your driveway, check the road. If it does not appear to be widened, a wing plow will return to plow again, and may push snow back into the entrance of your driveway. Doing this might keep you from clearing your driveway more than once.
7. During plowing operations some lawns will inadvertently be torn up. To help keep this from occurring, we recommend installing reflectors at the edge of your lawn as a guide for our plow operators. If lawn sprinkler systems are installed please keep them away from the edge of the road. The DPW in not responsible for repairing lawns or fixing or replacing lawn sprinklers if damaged during snow

plowing operations. Be aware that if you do decide to install sprinklers near the edge of the road, they could be on town property.

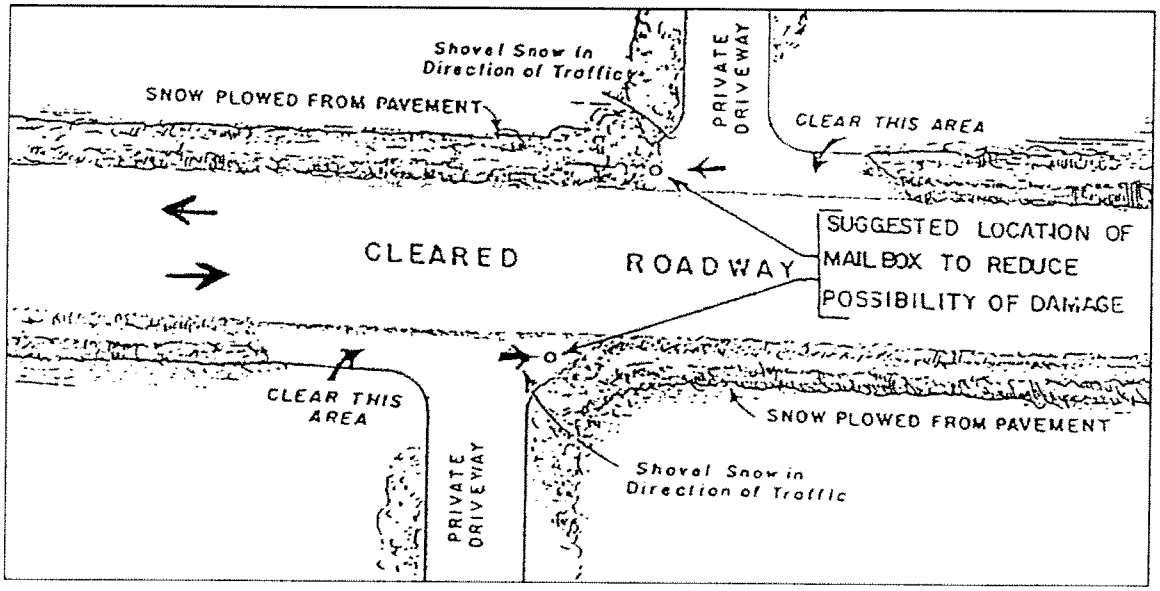
8. Finally, please have patience. Snow plowing is a time consuming and arduous job covering approximately 100 miles of road. Some residents will have their roads plowed first and some will be last, but all town roads will be cleared.

A winter suggestion for minimizing the amount of snow at the end of your driveway

Just as certain as the storms are, the certainty is that we will displease some property owners because we will be plowing their already cleared driveways full of snow again. Please understand that the DPW cannot plow out the end of your driveway, nor can the Town crew plow private property, and it is a violation of State Law to push or blow snow across a road or into a sidewalk.

Please inform your hired plows of this law. Most hired plow operators use common sense and are conscious of clearing driveways. A few hired plow operators take a cavalier attitude in the way they clear driveways, which poses a hazard to the public, and costs the taxpayers more money to have Town crews return to the site to clean up after the private plows.

During a storm, our plowing must keep the pavement or traveled right-of-way clear. After the storm, and after the pavement has been cleared, we must "widen out" and clear the road shoulders. During this phase, the "DPW/driveway conflict" appears. A plow on widening operations fills the opening of the driveway that you have cleared. We recognize this as discouraging and irritating, but with cooperation, this inconvenience can be minimized. The sketch below shows how your driveway can be initially cleared to reduce the possibility that after the plow passes you will be snow-bound again. We suggest that you clear your driveway in the manner suggested in the sketch. If you will shovel snow in the direction of traffic, and also make a pocket next to your driveway as shown, snow accumulation on the plow will drop into that pocket and only a bare minimum will go into the driveway opening.



Conclusion

The Department of Public Works is devoted to providing the residents with dependable snow removal in the shortest time possible. With your cooperation we will all benefit during a snowstorm.

If you have any questions concerning the snow removal policy, please call (978) 827 – 4120. We will try to assist you in any way possible.