

Snow and Ice Plan

Winter weather in the Portland area can change quickly and without warning, making travel unpredictable. The intensity of a single snow and ice storm can vary significantly throughout the metropolitan region because of the area's unique weather patterns and geography. The time of day the snow strikes also will influence winter travel. The next time it happens, be ready. Every resident and business should be prepared for the worst possible conditions and take heed of severe weather warnings. The City has all available work crews ready for round-the-clock service. We aim to manage an appropriate, cost-effective snow and ice response that keeps Portland roads as clear as possible.

Chains - your link to safety!

Buy chains, dry fit them, carry them in your vehicle, and use them. When ODOT issues a requirement to use chains on all State roads, remember that several highways run through Portland: 82nd Avenue, Powell Boulevard, Lombard Street, Barbur Boulevard, Sandy Boulevard (outer east side), and Macadam Boulevard.

Delay your trip until conditions are better

The best advice for traveling in bad winter weather is not to travel at all if you don't have to. Wait until conditions improve before venturing out. Allow the snow plows, sanding trucks, and other emergency vehicles to get out ahead of you to treat conditions. Allow yourself extra time to reach your destination.

Take transit

Plan to commute by public transit in bad weather. Call 503-238-RIDE (7433). TriMet advises riders to expect 20 to 30-minute bus delays, so plan accordingly, dress warmly, and be cautious crossing the street to your stop.

Check weather and road conditions - www.PublicAlerts.org

When you head out, give yourself extra time and check weather and traffic reports before you go. Check the website www.PublicAlerts.org for local street closures, highway road conditions, and transit schedules.

Plan your route according to plow routes

When there is a chance of snow and ice, the City prepares to enact its Snow and Ice Plan. Plow routes generally follow TriMet's major bus routes:

- A. Pre-identified hazard areas and critical locations (bridges, overpasses, steep hills, and emergency centers);
- B. Major arterial streets to support transit and routes that connect Police and Fire stations and hospitals;
- C. Additional arterial streets with a high daily traffic count and major collector streets;
- D. Neighborhood residential streets are not plowed in a storm event, and crews cannot safely get trucks up and down many steep and narrow side streets in the hills.

Traction Advisory Areas

Hazardous conditions in winter weather warrant extra caution and chains or studded tires if you choose to drive on these streets:

- West Hills – NW Cornell, West Burnside, Sam Jackson, NW Skyline, Germantown Road, SW Hamilton, SW Bancroft
- East Side – Mt. Scott, Mt. Tabor, Rocky Butte, SE Flavel, Marine Drive
- Council Crest is the highest point in the metro area at 1,071 feet above sea level

Of the City's 4,700 miles of streets, 1,300 miles are arterials, and of those, approximately 518 miles are major bus routes. In a winter storm, the City's limited number of trucks and employees are fully utilized to maintain the priority routes in a passable condition for buses, light rail, Streetcar, and emergency vehicle use. The City has a total of 55 trucks that can be fitted with snow plows and sand spreaders. In a major snowfall, it takes about 10-12 hours to plow a full route once. The Portland Plow Map and the Chain Zones Map are online at www.PublicAlerts.org. Enter your Portland address for the plow routes near you.

Prepare your home and family

Develop an emergency plan with your family that includes an alternate way home. Have a well-stocked emergency kit in your vehicle to keep you safe and more comfortable during long waits. Your kit should include chains, shovel, bag of sand, battery jumper cables, first aid kit, basic tools, blanket, extra clothing, flashlight, and cellular phone or CB Radio.

Staffing and equipment

During a major snow and ice event, crews switch to 12-hour shifts to ensure 24-hour coverage. A total of 55 large dump trucks are fitted with snowplows and sand spreaders to clear streets, bridges, and overpasses of snow and ice. These trucks are used every day for filling potholes, flushing streets, and carrying materials to and from work sites for paving. The full fleet includes an additional 5 anti-icing trucks, 10 service trucks, 5 big-wheel loaders, 2 backhoes, 2 road graders, 2 emergency trucks, 2 street closure trucks, and 1 fuel truck.

Road treatments

Road treatments include application of anti-icing and de-icing chemical, sanding, plowing, limited snow removal, and street closures. Rock salt is not used because of environmental concerns – it is corrosive to our bridges and harmful to fish and wildlife in our rivers and streams.

The City owns five trucks for anti-icing and de-icing city streets, bridges, and overpasses. The chemical used is calcium magnesium acetate (CMA), the most environmentally-friendly effective treatment. Magnesium chloride is used in temperatures below 17 degrees to increase the effectiveness of the de-icing chemical and to prevent sand from freezing in trucks. Anti-icing is normally carried out after the evening peak traffic period or before the morning rush because frost does not usually affect the road surface until late evenings or early mornings. Streets of grades over 14% cannot be treated because they would endanger crews and equipment.

Watch for black ice

Black ice is defined as ice that remains on roadways that are not subjected to direct sunlight. Black ice commonly forms on streets that wind around lakes and rivers, in tunnels, on overpasses and bridges, and in highly shaded, rural areas. Black ice is almost invisible. Be especially careful when driving and bicycling into shaded areas, and slow down during your approach. Leave yourself plenty of room to stop safely - at least three times more space than usual between you and the vehicle in front of you. Do not pass snow plows and sanding trucks; drivers have limited visibility.

You are responsible for your vehicle

Stay with your vehicle in a snow and ice storm. Any abandoned vehicle is subject to being cited and impounded. To locate your vehicle, call Police Auto Records at 503-823-0044. Any vehicle creating a safety hazard is subject to towing. If you are driving and visibility and conditions are getting worse rapidly, do not stop in a travel lane. Look for an opportunity to pull off the road into a safe parking area and wait for conditions to improve. If you cannot reach your home, move your vehicle off a major street or plow route onto a side street so that plows can completely open up major streets. If you become stuck or stranded in severe weather, stay with your vehicle for warmth and safety until help arrives. While you wait for help to arrive, open a window slightly, run your motor sparingly, and use emergency flashers.

Recover your vehicle as soon as possible

Parking regulations and other road safety regulations remain enforceable during a winter storm. If you leave your vehicle parked in a metered parking space or other time zone during a winter storm, recover your vehicle as soon as possible when conditions improve. If you receive a citation, follow the instructions on the back of it to resolve it or contest it with the County Circuit Court.

In the aftermath

As soon as possible, clear your catch basins, sidewalks, and driveways across pedestrian paths of snow and ice, slippery leaves, and debris. By City Code, property owners are liable for personal injury and property damage caused by snow, ice, and other debris on sidewalks and driveways. Pile shoveled snow where it can be absorbed into the ground, not on the street and public right-of-way.