
Clallam County Snow and Ice Removal Procedures



This web page provides an overview of snow removal and sanding procedures on Clallam County Roads.

The **Clallam County Public Works Department- Road Division** is comprised of approximately 12 permanent employees in each of the three districts. They maintain 488.5 miles of roads and 34 bridges within 1,750 square miles of Clallam County. Roads ***not*** under our jurisdiction include: State highways, such as Highways 101 and 112, city streets, Olympic National Park roads, Olympic National Forest roads, Department of Natural Resources roads, and private roads.

Three road maintenance crews are stationed in the Sequim, Port Angeles, and the Lake Creek (west end) areas. A satellite west end crew is also stationed in Clallam Bay. Three Road Supervisors oversee the activities of these crews. Each crew is responsible for maintenance of the roads in their respective areas; however, crew members and equipment are shifted to other areas as the need arises. We have two graders and four truck-mounted plows per district for our snow and ice removal.

Clallam County does not have snow every year. We may have several years between snow events, so unlike areas that expect annual snowfall, we do not set aside a significant budget for it. We do not hire additional employees or subcontractors for snow or storm events and we do not operate multiple shifts. Therefore, we ask people to be patient and understand that we may not have the equipment or staff that other areas do for snow removal.

During the winter months, **snow and ice removal** are a high priority for our crews. Snow events can be dangerous and frustrating experiences. It is important that people drive to their individual abilities. We encourage people to plan for alternate means of transportation (taking the public bus, for instance) during these events and drive only when necessary. We ask for patience while we are working. Most accidents that occur during snow events are from people driving too fast for the conditions.



Slow down. Even roads that appear clear can be slick when wet.

Frequently Asked Questions:

How do we determine what roads to plow and sand and in what order?

We respond to all emergencies and life threatening calls first, as determined by law enforcement agencies. After that, we plow arterials (Old Olympic Highway, for example) and heavily traveled roads first. School bus routes are of high importance. Residential streets are plowed as we can. During heavy snow events, we may plow and sand the main roads several times before having time to work on residential areas. Because of this, we do not take requests for plowing on residential roads.

Can you tell me when my road will be plowed?

Because each storm event is different, there is no set schedule for when plowing will occur. If we have advance notice of the storm (www.weather.gov/seattle), we prepare our equipment and generally begin plowing at 6 a.m. We may start earlier, depending on the situation.

Why can't you send a crew out all night to plow and sand roads?

Clallam County does not employ multiple shifts like some agencies do. This means that we have one crew in each district to take care of all of the storm clean up needs. For safety reasons, we generally start our crews as early as possible in the morning during snow events and release them home at night. At this time we limit our employees to a shift no longer than 10-12 hours.

Night work is slow and dangerous. We feel we accomplish more during the day shift than we would using our limited staff at night.

Do you plow and sand on weekends and holidays?

Yes, we do. Our crews are on call 24-hours per day, 7 days per week. However, during holidays, we may have less staff available to work.

That being said, we have to be careful with how we spend our limited budget. Overtime costs during the winter affect services that we can offer during other times of the year. On weekends and holidays, people may have more choices on whether they need to drive, whereas during the week school and work obligations make plowing and sanding a higher priority.

How can I find out about road conditions?

For State Highways, the road information number is 5-1-1 or <http://wsdot.wa.gov/traffic/trafficalerts/default.aspx>. For County road conditions, you may phone us directly. We rarely have up-to-date information on each road in the County, as we are not in constant contact with our crews in the field. We can provide overall information, and more specific information as it becomes available.

Do you use salt on County Roads?

Overall, no. We use sand on County roads. Other agencies have a liquid deicer product that they can apply to roads; we do not. We do keep a small amount of salt on hand for extreme ice compaction situations that we can use on a case-by-case basis.

Where do you get your sand?

We screen our own sand from County owned gravel pits located in various areas of the County.

You plowed in my driveway. Will you come back and shovel it out?

We do what we can to keep driveways clear, but it is an unavoidable part of plowing. We do not have the staff to shovel out or plow driveways. Citizens should be prepared to open the blockages between driveways and the County road.

Why did you block my driveway and not my neighbors?

While our drivers do their best to avoid blocking driveways during the snow removal process, it is unavoidable. During plowing snow gathers on the blade of the plow. Depending on the amount of snow, and how heavy it is, the snow falls off the blade at random locations along the road as it fills up the plow. There are times that the snow falls off, blocking one driveway and not another. Other times the snow is light enough that no driveways are impacted. Snow and snow removal is inconvenient for everyone. We ask for your patience and understanding during this time.

Will you plow or shovel out our mailbox area?

We do our best to make mailboxes accessible for the U.S. Postal Services and citizens, unfortunately, we do not have the staff to shovel out mailbox areas.

I am disabled or have medical conditions that prevent me from maintaining my driveway, how can you help?

Often there are community groups that help in those situations some for a fee, others on a volunteer basis determined by income, age, and need. There are also companies that can be hired for snow removal listed as "Snow Removal Services" in the yellow pages of the phone book. It is important to plan for snow and stormy weather situations ahead of time. Consider putting a phone list together for yourself with various numbers for services that you may need during a winter storm. Having them ready can save time and frustration. Links for disaster preparedness information can be found at the bottom of this page.

Once the snow is gone, how do you handle sand removal?

We do not begin sweeping up sand until we are sure that all danger of snow and ice has passed. It may take several weeks after an event to sweep the roads. We have one pick-up broom (sweeper that has the ability to vacuum), and one sweeper that moves the debris to the side of the road without vacuuming, in each of our three districts.

Sweeping is a time consuming process. It takes several slow passes along a road to remove sand and debris from storm events. We ask for patience during this time.

Our mailbox was broken by a plow, will you repair it?

Due to staff and budget limitations, we will not. Mailboxes should be installed using DOT approved posts and hardware. By using this approved equipment, there is a much better chance that your mailbox will remain safe during snow removal. Most mailboxes are damaged not from the plows themselves, but from the heavy snow that is pushed off of the blade as it travels along the road. Old posts and loose mailboxes are at higher risk of being damaged due to normal snow removal procedures. Please call if you have questions on what hardware meets the AASHTO design standards.

My windshield was damaged from gravel on the road, who do I contact about the damage?

You should notify your private insurance company and ask about their process. If you need to contact the County, the County Risk Management number is 360-417-2241. The claim form can be found at: <http://www.clallam.net/documents/ClallamCountyStandardTortClaimForm.pdf>

Can you plow private roads?

We are only allowed to spend County road funds on County roads per RCW 36.82.070. There are private companies that you can hire for this. They are listed under "Snow Removal Services" in the phone book.

I do not like the way our road was plowed. Who can I speak to?

You are always welcome to call us and discuss your concerns. However, during storm events we receive an enormous volume of calls and will not be able to reroute plows or graders back to an area. As always, we do the very best that we can to keep County roads safe.

How do I report unsafe driving of County plow drivers?

Safety is our first priority. You can contact us at 360-417-2379. It will help to have the license plate number and description of the vehicle you are calling about.

Can I request special maintenance procedures for our road or in front of my residence or business?

Unfortunately not. We have many citizens with various needs in this county. We strive to provide the highest level of service to the greatest number of people. There is no way for us to individualize maintenance along a public road.

The full administrative policy on snow and ice removal is available here:

http://www.clallam.net/Board/assets/applets/828_Snow_and_Ice_Removal.pdf

Basic Winter Preparedness Guidelines:

<http://www.redcross.org/www-files/Documents/pdf/Preparedness/WinterStorms.pdf>

Winter Preparedness Guidelines for seniors:

<http://www.peninsularedcross.org/Disaster/Brochures/DisasterPreparednessSeniors.pdf>

WSDOT Winter Driving Guide:

http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/NR/rdonlyres/EEF2229F-F9BD-477E-B37F-9078ACADFB4F/0/winter_brochureweb.pdf

WSDOT Winter Driving Website:

<http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/winter>

City of Port Angeles snow removal procedures:

<http://www.cityofpa.us/pwStreets.htm#SnowRemoval>

Photos courtesy of Chris Enges