



# Snow & Ice Control Policy

Revised 05/09/2023

## **PREFACE:**

The following Policy has been established to provide guidelines for the public and county staff to follow in order to ensure safe and consistent practices for snow and ice removal during winter storm events. Our goal is to have all County Roads passable within a reasonable amount of time after a snowfall has stopped. Our plowing priorities reflect a commitment to ensuring that key roads are kept open to serve critical facilities and to provide access between state highways and our communities.

## **BACKGROUND:**

Renville County maintains approximately 711 miles of County State Aid Highways and County Roads. Currently snow removal operations are accomplished with 19 units (12 truck mounted snow plows with wings, sanders, & underbody scrapers and 7 motor graders with snow plows and wings). In order to reasonably meet the public's expectations; the following Policy will apply.

## **BASIS OF POLICY:**

RENVILLE COUNTY DOES NOT ASSURE A COMPLETELY BARE ROAD AND WILL NOT SAND ENTIRE SECTIONS OF ROADWAY. USERS OF THE ROADWAY ARE REMINDED TO EXERCISE CAUTION AND DRIVE WITH CARE.

## **THE LEGAL SPEED LIMIT MAY NOT BE POSSIBLE AT ALL TIMES.**

***DISPATCHING OF SNOW PLOWS*** - The decision to plow and/or sand will be made by the County Engineer, Highway Maintenance Engineer and/or Highway Maintenance Supervisor based on the following guidelines:

1. The County will NOT dispatch plows until after the snowfall and/or wind has stopped; EXCEPT (a) in an emergency or other *special* circumstance, or (b) when conditions allow reasonable accomplishments to be made.
2. The County will perform snow removal when accumulation exceeds one (1) inch or seriously affects travel.
3. The County will perform snow removal when drifting snow on the roadway seriously affects travel.
4. The County will perform ice control measures when icy conditions seriously affect travel.
5. The County will perform sanding operations at critical areas, including: curves, hills, intersections, and bridges.



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**HOURS OF OPERATION** - Renville County is staffed for one shift of snow and ice removal. In a snow event, the necessary county personnel will be mobilized by the Highway Maintenance Supervisor by 4:30 AM, with ALL necessary equipment on the road by 5:00 AM. Any deviation from the start time must be approved by the County Engineer, Highway Maintenance Engineer and/or Highway Maintenance Supervisor

Weekends and holidays may receive a reduced level of service.

Operator duty shifts are generally limited to a maximum of 12 hours per day therefore; most routes will not have coverage between 5:00 p.m. and 5:00 a.m.

Operations will be halted when: (a) service levels are reached, (b) coverage time has elapsed, (c) conditions are too hazardous, (d) reasonable accomplishments cannot be made, (e) when MNDOT closes the roadways in Renville County under their jurisdiction or when a "NO TRAVEL" advisory is issued.

**ROAD PRIORITIES** - It is the goal of the Highway Department to serve the majority of the public in the quickest way possible, with this in mind, roads with higher traffic volumes will *typically* receive higher priority. The following are the priorities plow operators will attempt to adhere to.

1. All CSAH & County Roads lying within cities.
2. County State Aid Highways (CSAH) classified as Major Collector Roadways which carry heavy traffic volumes connecting cities, State Highways, neighboring Counties, or are intra-County corridors. These are always paved.
3. County State Aid Highways (CSAH) classified as Minor Collector Roadways that provide rural area access to cities and State or US Highways. These are usually paved but could be gravel.
4. Medium volume County Roads that serve as mail and/or school bus routes and provide access for numerous rural residents. These are usually gravel but may be paved.
5. Low volume County Roads that may serve as mail and/or school bus routes but serve few rural residents. These are usually gravel. Gravel roads may not be plowed all the time. Plowing of gravel roads will be based on amount and type of snow.
6. Contracted Township Roads will receive service after service levels are reached on all CSAH and County Road routes. This will generally be same day service but is not guaranteed. Mail and school bus routes will receive top priority. The Renville County Highway Maintenance Supervisor will dispatch County Units to perform snow removal.

**PROPERTY DAMAGE** - Mailboxes, fences, hedges, trees, etc., damaged during snow and ice removal are evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Only those items that were damaged by actual contact with County equipment will be repaired at the County's expense, provided they were located and installed to current standards.

**REQUESTS FOR ASSISTANCE** - Requests for assistance will be generally classified as emergency or non-emergency and will be handled accordingly.



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**DECLARED EMERGENCY** - An emergency situation is one that may be classified as bona fide police, medical or fire emergency that is potentially life threatening and requires the involvement of emergency vehicles such as police, ambulance or fire trucks. Dispatch of county equipment shall be ordered by the County Engineer (or his/her designee) only at the request of the County Sheriff through his emergency response team or 911 system. It is the responsibility of the Sheriff's emergency response team to evaluate each situation as to the validity of the declared emergency. Once an emergency situation is determined to exist and a request for assistance has been issued through the Sheriff's department, the County Engineer (or his/her designee) will order the dispatch of county equipment under the following conditions:

1. Request for assistance has been received from the Sheriff's office or emergency dispatcher.
2. Assurance that an emergency vehicle(s), (police, ambulance or fire truck) with qualified personnel in attendance will be enroute.
3. The situation is potentially life threatening.

In a declared emergency, the County will dispatch a minimum of two units, usually one tandem truck snow plow and one motor grader to serve as escort for the emergency vehicle(s). The responsibility for coordination and execution of the mission shall be a mutual agreement between the Sheriff's Department, emergency personnel, and plow operators, **with the plow operators to have the final go or no-go decision**. It is the intent of this directive to save lives, not endanger others because of hasty, ill-prepared decisions. The dispatch of county equipment shall be on an availability basis as operators are not on an "on call" status similar to police, ambulance or fire personnel.

**NON-EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE** - All non-emergency responses will be at the request of the County Sheriff. Non-emergency requests for assistance can be classified as being non-life threatening in nature and not requiring emergency vehicle(s) participation. These would include stranded motorists, livestock confinement operations, private parties request for fuel/groceries, etc., or any other situations that are deemed non-life threatening.

If the county responds to a non-emergency request for assistance, the county will dispatch a minimum of two units, usually one tandem truck snow plow and one motor grader. The responsibility for coordination and execution of the mission shall be a mutual agreement between the Sheriff's Department, the County Engineer (or his/her designee) and the plow operators, **with the plow operators to have the final go or no-go decision**. It is the intent of this directive to save lives and property, not endanger others because of hasty, ill-prepared decisions. The dispatch of county equipment shall be on an availability basis as operators are not on an "on call" status similar to police, ambulance or fire personnel. Such responses shall be billed to the requesting party at overtime rates with a minimum of two hours of time per unit dispatched.

**UTILITY COMPANIES** - Utility companies and their responsibilities present a unique situation and each case should be considered independently after evaluation by the County Sheriff, Utility Company and County crews.

**STRANDED MOTORISTS** - Stranded motorists who become stuck in snow banks pose a unique situation for Highway Personnel due to potential liability problems encountered when attempting to dislodge the stuck vehicle. For this reason, plow operators will not attempt to remove a stuck vehicle unless: (a) directed to by law enforcement, (b) The vehicle is creating an endangerment to the traveling public and there is the possibility that life or health is in danger, or (c) is hindering snow removal operations. Operators will always be ready to summon help at the motorist's request via two-way radio or another available communications device.



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**ROAD CLOSURES** - Renville County fully intends to keep the County Road System open for safe travel for all users, however, there will be times that this will simply not be possible due to extreme weather conditions. When Renville County snow plows are pulled from their routes due to the above conditions, the Sheriff's Office and local media will be notified.

**RESIDENTIAL PLOWING** - County residents are reminded that it is unlawful under Minnesota Statute 160.2715, (a) (1) to plow snow from driveways onto or across County Roads. Piles of snow left on or near the road can freeze into a solid mass creating a hazardous situation for vehicles and snowplows. Piles of snow increase the chance of drifting snow on the roadway. Accidents and damages caused by snow piles placed in the roadway may result in liability to the property owner.

**SUMMARY OF THE POLICY:**

This Policy was developed to provide guidelines for both county personnel and the traveling public. This policy intends to cover the majority of situations normally encountered in winter storm events. If certain situations arise that are not part of the above Policy, the County Engineer (or his/her designee) will deal with them on a case-by-case basis.

Effective Date of Policy: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Chairperson  
 Renville County Board of Commissioners

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Date

Attest:

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Renville County Administrator

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Date