

PLATTE COUNTY GOVERNMENT

Road and Bridge Department
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SNOW PLOWING POLICY

Our policy is to keep the roads open, safe, and usable for all drivers, to the extent that we possibly can. We have plows that are kept in the Glendo and Chugwater areas, and several that are based at the shop in Wheatland. So, following a snowstorm, we are able to begin plowing operations from several points around the county.

Our priorities are the more highly traveled roads and the main arteries, such as the surfaced roads. However, we have school buses traveling almost every road, there are mail routes, and those who have to get to work. We start early on mornings with fresh snowfall or icy conditions, and try to get to as many roads as we can as early as possible. On most days we plow snow all through the day and stay out at least until we are sure the buses have successfully gotten the kids home and returned to the bus garage. In any major storm, we typically work 12, 14 or even 16 hour days, but we cannot work around the clock.

When there is significant snowfall and high winds develop, we are not able, at times, to keep all the roads open. There are situations where, in just 10 or 15 minutes, the road goes from freshly plowed to again impassable. In such instances, the decision may be made by the superintendent to suspend all plowing operations, until the wind diminishes, and actual progress can again be realized in keeping the roads open. Even when that happens, we still work with the school transportation department to insure the buses are cared for and the kids are returned home safely.

We do not respond to calls from people who simply try to get through drifted roads and become stuck and want help getting out, or who want a ride to their destination. We are not a towing company, or a public transportation company. Our purpose is and must be to open the roads. We do aid people we find stuck in the roads during our regular plowing operations, with the objective of having the road clear of obstacles and plowable.

We often receive complaints from those living along county roads who say that our clearing the drifts from the road results in their driveway approaches being filled with snow. Unfortunately, that does happen, and when using a V-plow or trying to move as much snow as possible downwind in order to keep the roads open longer, the result may be snow in driveways. If we were to stop and plow out every driveway along every county road, it would take us several days longer to cover the whole county with the plows. That makes it unfeasible to do so. The other option would be to not plow the section of road in front of their driveway, but then they would still be blocked in. So we have to deal with several hundred miles of drifted and blocked county roads, and they may have to deal with the 3 or 4 feet at the end of their driveway.

We know there are a lot of people who absolutely have to use county roads for very good reasons, such as cattle-feeding operations, and those with other livestock to care for. In many cases those people do not wait for us to get there when we can, but rather take it on their own to use their loaders, tractors, and so on to open the roads they need to use. We have no problem with that, and really appreciate their efforts to help out, rather than simply increasing the pressure on our snowplowing. We would just ask that they try not to tear up the road, or remove the gravel along with the snow.

On occasion, too, there are legitimate emergency situations where access to a county road is a must, such as those who become lost or various medical needs. The Road and Bridge is committed to doing all we can to assist in such critical matters, whenever they arise. We would encourage people in the area, especially those considerable distances from town, or those who live on less traveled county or state roads, to give thought to keeping on hand adequate supplies of food, medicine and prescriptions, propane, livestock feed, and other daily essentials. They may want to stock up on such items at times when the weather and the road conditions are good for travel.

Finally, when Emergency Management issues a travel advisory, or asks people to eliminate unnecessary travel and to just stay home, that advise should be heeded carefully. The Road and Bridge Department and the dispatch center will work together to keep the public advised of current conditions and at times when the plowing is suspended until conditions improve, the public will be made aware of it. If it is unsafe for a snowplow, and if large machinery is unable to move and get through the drifts, the general public will not fare too well, either. People need to weigh carefully if driving in such conditions is really necessary, and if it is worth the risk.