

Adopting a Snow and Ice Control Policy

Why You Should Consider Adopting a Snow and Ice Control Policy Now

If your highway department is like others, you are reading this after a day of repairing asphalt roads, grading roads or ditches, mowing, or some other summer work. Maybe, you just finished picking up the last of the sand you put down over the winter. You are probably not ready to think about the next load of sand you will put down in just a few short months. Yet, developing policies for the winter season is easier now than before you have to clear the snow from an Alberta Clipper.

The NHDOT

The New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NHDOT) revised its Snow and Ice Control Policy in 1992. Steve Gray, the NHDOT Highway Maintenance Engineer was instrumental in adopting the policy. He has found it to be a vital part of their winter operations.

The NHDOT policy states the impossibility of having bare pavement through a storm. The policy sets levels of service to provide bare pavement within a day after a normal snowfall, or two days after a severe storm. The policy acknowledges that winter storms vary. Therefore, it is not feasible to create rules governing all winter operations: strategies are more appropriate. It also recognizes the importance of employees' good personal judgment.

Developing a Policy

The first step to develop a snow and ice policy is to establish levels of service for different storm conditions. This might take one or more public forums. These give the director of public works or road agent the opportunity to educate their customers.

A level of service speaks to the what roads will look like during and after a storm. How often will a truck make a pass through each route? After a storm, will the roads be covered with hard pack or be bare? Maintenance strategies must be addressed along with materials usage and material types, application rates, and under what weather conditions materials will be used.

Benefits to the Municipality

Once the municipality establishes a level of service it must adopt a policy to support it. The policy should include strategies for winter maintenance, such as deicing or anti-icing.

Determining a level of service and adopting a policy serves a number of purposes:

- it protects the municipality,
- lets the employees know what is expected,
- educates the municipality's residents,
- and it is a basis for budgeting.

A written policy provides the municipality with a standard for snow and ice removal. If a complaint or legal issue arises, the town can show they have a consistent plan to handle winter conditions. This is particularly helpful if the residents have had input into the policy. Also, the driving public knows what to expect.

A policy enables municipal employees to know what is expected of them. How often they are expected to make a pass. For example, how many hours they are expected to work during and after a storm. What safety procedures they should follow. What materials they should use and when.

A snow and ice removal policy educates the road manager's customers, giving customers a voice to say what level of service they want (and will support). The education process allows the road manager the opportunity to explain basic elements of snow and ice removal. The forum gives customers the opportunity to ask questions about procedures and to inform management what they consider important.

A policy provides a base to develop a budget. A municipality committed to maintaining a certain level of service is more likely to provide funds to achieve it. Any funding they provide short the policy, decreases the policy's value.

Conclusion

As you can see, there are many good reasons to have a snow and ice control policy. For a copy of the NHDOT snow and ice control policy call the UNH T² Center.