



Winter Road Maintenance Policy

Policy No.: POL-T06-01

Schedule 'A' to By-Law No.

Adopted:

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SECTION 1 – Purpose

The purpose of this Policy is to establish a clear, consistent, and defensible framework for the winter maintenance of Class 5 and Class 6 municipal roads and sidewalks.

The objectives of this Policy are to:

- Promote the safety and accessibility of municipal roads and sidewalks during winter conditions
- Reduce hazards associated with snow and ice accumulation
- Support the orderly movement of vehicular and pedestrian traffic
- Ensure compliance with Ontario Regulation 239/02 – Minimum Maintenance Standards (MMS)
- Provide Council, staff, and the public with a transparent understanding of the municipality’s winter maintenance approach

Through this Policy, the municipality seeks to balance enhanced service targets with responsible resource management, recognizing that winter conditions in Northern Ontario can be variable and severe.

SECTION 2 – Scope

This Policy applies to all municipal personnel involved in the winter maintenance of Class 5 and Class 6 municipal roads and sidewalks within the municipality.

The Policy establishes the municipality’s commitment, service objectives, and accountability framework for winter maintenance activities, including but not limited to:

- Road and sidewalk patrolling
- Snow plowing and sanding operations
- Sidewalk winter maintenance
- Treatment of ice formation
- Response to freeze-thaw cycles
- Response to significant weather events
- Record keeping and regulatory compliance

This Policy provides overarching direction to ensure winter maintenance activities are carried out in a manner that prioritizes public safety, service consistency, and compliance with applicable legislation, while recognizing the operational realities faced by the municipality.

Operational details, procedures, and role-specific responsibilities shall be set out in supporting Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and internal guidelines.

SECTION 3 – Definitions

For the purpose of this Policy, the following definitions apply:

Ice Formation: The development of ice on road and sidewalk surfaces due to freezing rain, melting snow, or other weather conditions.

Patrol: Observing the conditions of a municipal highway or sidewalk by driving along the highway (physical inspection) to check for hazards such as snow accumulation, ice formation, or other conditions that could affect safety.

Road Classification: The classification of roads shall follow the criteria set out in Ontario Regulation 239/02 – Minimum Maintenance Standards for Municipal Highways, using the *Classification of Highways* table. Roads are categorized based on average daily traffic volume (ADT) and posted speed limit. All Municipal roads in TOSRF are classified as one of the following:

- **Class 5:** ADT of 200–499 vehicles and posted speed limit of 50 km/h or less.
- **Class 6:** ADT of fewer than 199 vehicles and posted speed limit of 50 km/h or less.

Note:

This definition aligns with Ontario Regulation 239/02 – Minimum Maintenance Standards for Municipal Highways, which requires highway classification to be based on average daily traffic volume (ADT) and posted speed limit. Using these objective criteria ensures consistency with provincial standards and avoids confusion that can arise from subjective factors such as road function or perceived importance.

Significant Weather Event: An approaching or occurring weather hazard with the potential to pose a significant danger to users of the highways within the municipality.

Snow Accumulation: Natural accumulation of newly fallen snow, wind-blown snow, or slush covering more than half a lane width of a roadway.

Treated Winter Sand: ... A mixture of sand blended with approximately 5% sodium chloride (salt) by weight. The added salt prevents the sand from freezing and enhances its ability to provide traction on icy or snow-covered surfaces.

SECTION 4 – Service Level Commitment and Limitations

The municipality establishes and publicly identifies target service levels for winter maintenance activities within this Winter Maintenance Policy, as endorsed by Council. These Levels of Service targets reflect best practices, community expectations, and compliance with Ontario Regulation 239/02 – Minimum Maintenance Standards for Municipal Highways. Operational procedures and internal SOPs will support the implementation of these levels of service.

The municipality recognizes that external factors beyond its control – including severe or prolonged weather events, equipment failures, staffing constraints, and emergency operational demands – may affect the ability to achieve these targets at all times.

Service targets described in this section are subject to the limitations set out in Section 10 – Compliance and Service Level Limitations of this Policy.

SECTION 5 – Regulatory Compliance

This Policy shall be implemented and interpreted in accordance with the *Municipal Act, 2001*, Ontario Regulation 239/02 (*Minimum Maintenance Standards for Municipal Highways*), as amended, and all other applicable provincial legislation, regulations, and municipal by-laws. Nothing in this Policy shall be construed as creating a higher standard of care or legal duty than that required under applicable legislation.

SECTION 6 – Policy Administration

The Public Works Coordinator is responsible for the administration of this Policy, including ensuring that appropriate Standard Operating Procedures are developed and maintained, overseeing implementation and compliance, and reporting to senior administration and Council as required. This Policy shall be reviewed periodically and updated as necessary to reflect legislative changes, operational experience, and Council direction.

SECTION 7 – Roles and Responsibilities

Public Works Coordinator: Oversees the implementation of winter road maintenance activities, ensuring compliance with Ontario Regulation 239/02 (Minimum Maintenance Standards) while striving to achieve the enhanced service levels approved by Council. This includes monitoring patrol frequency, snow and ice response times, and coordinating available resources to support the achievement of enhanced service targets where feasible.

Public Works Lead Hand: Monitors weather conditions and ensures winter patrols are conducted in accordance with Ontario Regulation 239/02 – Minimum Maintenance Standards. In addition, as a municipal best practice, conducts at least three weather forecast monitors and one documented patrol per scheduled shift within a 24-hour period to verify roadway conditions. When weather monitoring indicates a substantial probability of snow accumulation, ice formation, or icy roadways, patrols shall be carried out on representative highways at intervals deemed necessary by the municipality. During declared Significant Weather Events or adverse conditions, the Lead Hand may increase patrol frequency (e.g., every 6–8 hours) or adjust intervals as required, including after-hours coverage when possible.

Public Works Crew: Responsible for carrying out winter maintenance activities in accordance with approved Standards Operating Procedures and direction from supervisory staff.

SECTION 8 – Procedures

(The procedures described in this section provide a high-level policy overview and are further detailed in the municipality’s Winter Maintenance Standard Operating Procedures.)

Winter maintenance activities are carried out between October 1 and April 30, recognizing that conditions may require response outside this period.

Patrolling

Patrolling is conducted to monitor road and sidewalk conditions and identify hazards. At a minimum, one patrol is intended to occur per shift, with additional monitoring undertaken when weather conditions change significantly or where conditions warrant increased attention. During winter storm events or declared Significant Weather Events, patrol frequency may be increased to every six to eight hours, or other intervals deemed necessary, when feasible.

Snow Removal

Snow removal operations are initiated when snow accumulation or slush resulting from thawing cycles exceeds approximately six centimetres, unless otherwise directed. The municipality’s objective is to clear snow from municipal roads and sidewalks within twelve hours where feasible, while minimizing disruptions to vehicular and pedestrian traffic.

Ice Formation Treatment

Ice formation treatment involves the application of treated winter sand or other approved abrasives to improve traction. The municipality does not use road salt or other chemical agents for de-icing or anti-icing due to environmental concerns, infrastructure preservation, and cost-effectiveness. The municipality’s target is to address ice formation within eight hours where feasible, with priority given to higher-risk areas such as intersections, curves, hills, and pedestrian routes.

Sidewalk Winter Maintenance

Sidewalk winter maintenance is limited to designated routes determined by available equipment and operational capacity. Sidewalks may be maintained using either a recreational trail vehicle (RTV) or grader, depending on location and conditions, with routes established and maintained through operational procedures.

Significant Weather Events

A Significant Weather Event (SWE) may be declared when the municipality determines that an approaching or occurring weather hazard has the potential to pose a significant danger to users of municipal highways. This determination will be based on Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) alerts, which use a colour-coded system:

- **Yellow** – Weather hazard possible
- **Orange** – Weather hazard expected
- **Red** – Severe weather hazard imminent or occurring

Authority to Declare:

The authority to declare a Significant Weather Event rests with the Public Works Coordinator or designate, based on ECCC alerts and local conditions.

Posting of Declaration:

When a Significant Weather Event is declared, the municipality shall post the declaration promptly on:

- The municipal website,
- Official social media platform
- Other communication platforms as appropriate (e.g. Voyent alerts).

End of Event:

The authorized person shall declare the end of the Significant Weather Event when, in their discretion, the municipality can resume winter maintenance services that meet the requirements of the tables in sections 4 and 5 and section 16 of the MMS.

Operational Response:

During a declared Significant Weather Event, winter maintenance activities may be intensified, subject to resource availability, with a focus on maintaining compliance with Ontario Regulation 239/02 – Minimum Maintenance Standards (MMS). Patrolling frequency may be increased, and service priorities adjusted to address hazardous conditions.

SECTION 9 – Record Keeping

The municipality shall maintain records of winter maintenance activities, including weather monitoring, patrols, snow removal, sanding, and responses to significant weather events. Records shall document dates, times, locations, and actions taken and shall be retained in accordance with municipal record-keeping requirements. Incidents or accidents related to winter conditions shall also be documented where applicable.

SECTION 10 – Compliance and Service Level Limitations

Operational response times set out in Schedule “A” and in supporting Standard Operating Procedures are targets only and do not constitute guaranteed service levels.

While this Policy establishes enhanced winter maintenance service targets, circumstances such as severe or prolonged weather events, equipment failures, staffing constraints, or emergency situations may affect the municipality’s ability to meet these targets.

In all cases, the municipality shall maintain compliance with Ontario Regulation 239/02 – Minimum Maintenance Standards as the baseline legal requirement. Nothing in this Policy shall be interpreted as creating a higher standard of care or legal duty than that required under applicable legislation.

SECTION 11 – Review and Updates

This Policy shall be reviewed periodically and updated as necessary to reflect legislative changes, operational experience, and Council direction.

SCHEDULE “A” – Winter Maintenance Operational Response Targets

(Class 5 and Class 6 Municipal Roads and Sidewalks)

Activity	Target Response Time	Notes
Routine Patrolling	Once per shift (October 1 – April 30)	Once per shift. Patrol frequency may increase based on changing conditions – see Weather Monitoring.
Weather Monitoring	Three times per calendar day	Monitor weather forecast at a minimum of three (3) times per day and record activity
Additional Patrolling	As conditions warrant	Conducted when weather conditions change significantly or hazards are identified.
Snow Plowing – Roads	Within 12 hours	Initiated when snow or slush accumulation exceeds approximately 6 cm, where feasible.
Snow Clearing – Sidewalks	Within 12 hours	Same trigger threshold as roads. Priority given to higher-traffic pedestrian routes.
Ice Formation Treatment	Within 8 hours	Application of treated winter sand or approved abrasives. Priority given to intersections, curves, hills, and pedestrian areas.
Significant Weather Events	Patrol every 6–8 hours or as deemed necessary	Includes after-hours coverage where feasible, subject to staffing and equipment availability.

Interpretation Note

The response targets set out in this Schedule represent operational objectives intended to enhance winter maintenance service levels. The response targets are not intended to define or expand the municipality’s legal duty of care. Actual response times may be affected by weather severity, equipment availability, staffing resources, and emergency conditions. Compliance with Ontario Regulation 239/02 – Minimum Maintenance Standards shall remain the municipality’s minimum legal obligation at all times.