

## Frequently Asked Questions: Snow Removal

### How does the County prepare for the snow and ice season?

Throughout the year, County employees get ready by stockpiling thousands of tons of salt at strategic locations, testing equipment, and practicing snow routes. The County also contracts with individuals and companies who have heavy equipment, which then are placed on standby should they be needed.

### What roads is the County responsible for clearing?

Public Works is responsible for clearing County maintained roads. Annapolis City clears its own streets, as does Ft. Meade, the Naval Academy, and Private Communities. The State Highway Administration is responsible for clearing state routes and interstates.

### What should I do if there's an emergency and I don't think rescue vehicles can get through on the snowy roads?

If public safety agencies need help getting to you, they will work with Public Works to get the road cleared.

### Why do plows block my driveway with snow when they clear the road?

We are sorry for this inconvenience, but to make as many roads passable as quickly as possible, there is no way to avoid it. County snowplow operators push the snow off the roadway in smooth, continuous passes. It ends up in gutters and on-road shoulders, sometimes blocking driveways. To avoid doing double work, shovel snow from your driveway after a plow has been by. Shovel it to the right of your driveway as you face the road.

### How does the County decide which roads to clear first?

Common sense dictates that roads carrying the most traffic (at higher speeds) get top priority. Main roads are cleared first. Collector roads are cleared second. If school is in session, bus routes also get early snow removal attention. Once the snow stops and main roads are clear, residential streets will be salted or plowed in accordance with our [Travel Guide](#).

### I sometimes see County trucks driving with their plows up when it is snowing. Why?

There are several reasons plows aren't always pushing snow. Trucks may be spreading salt only in order to chemically de-ice prior to mechanical removal. They may be out and headed back to the maintenance yard for a refill. Or they may be en route to their assigned area. Be assured that when it snows, County crews work around the clock until roads are passable.

### How soon will all roads be passable after a storm?

Our goal is to make all roads passable as quickly as possible after a storm ends. County snow removal crews work around the clock until conditions are safe for traveling. During a typical storm (under 4 inches), snow removal operations on County-maintained roadways should be completed within 24-36 hours after the end of the storm. For more information regarding our service levels during inclement weather, please view our [Travel Guide](#).

### Every year the street next to mine gets plowed, and my street is passed by until much later. Why?

The County follows a priority plowing strategy that clears arterial roads, collector roads, local roads, and cul-de-sacs, in that order. Depending on your street type and those around you, the timing of snow removal service may vary. Also, many subdivisions have more than one snowplow assigned to clear their streets. If the plow you see doesn't get to your street, it means another one has been assigned to your part of the neighborhood and will be along soon.

### **Why doesn't the County put salt on the roads before it snows?**

Hills and trouble spots such as bridges and overpasses may be chemically treated prior to snowfall, which helps prevent icing. However, putting salt on all roads before the snow falls wastes time and money since the salt can bounce/ scatter or be blown off the pavement. Salt is most effective after the snow has accumulated about an inch and the temperature is 27 degrees Fahrenheit or higher. Under these conditions, the salt and snow will mix, melting the snow into a slush that can be plowed off the pavement. This melting occurs within two hours or sooner if traffic is using the roadway. If the temperature is below 20 degrees, salt will not effectively melt the snow and ice. In this case, other methods are used, including the use of calcium chloride to melt the ice and snow.

### **Does the County pre-treat roads before it snows?**

The County pretreats all Arterial Roads and some Collector Roads with a water/salt mix called Salt Brine. This appears as "white lines" on the road. Salt Brine is a combination of rock salt and water to create a mixture of 23.3% Brine which is the ideal ratio to help with reducing the bonding of snow to the road service, makes plowing more effective, and provides cost savings with the reduced amount of salt needed. Note: One ton of salt produces approximately 1,000 gallons of salt brine.

An additional note is that the Bureau of Highways has a Pre Wet System that is used to control and enhance the melting capabilities of rock salt.

The Pre Wet process is simply salt brine and or calcium chloride sprayed directly onto the salt as it is discharged from a spreader truck. This accomplishes two things; one it activates the salt so that melting occurs at a faster rate and secondly it keeps the salt from bouncing off the road where it doesn't belong.

### **How can I find out about road conditions in other areas of the state?**

You can call 511 or visit [www.md511.org](http://www.md511.org) to follow County Road conditions and Plow Status.

### **How can I get my street on the County's list of roads to be plowed?**

There is no such list. If your street is a County maintained roadway, Public Works is responsible for clearing it. The county provides an online tool for residents to verify if their street is included in our snow removal plan as well as what level of service to expect given your street type. Public Works does not maintain roads with a route number. For assistance on these roads, contact the State Highways Administration at 410-841-1000.

### **Who is responsible for clearing my sidewalk?**

You are. The County does not remove snow from sidewalks, concentrating instead on making the roads safe. Snow and ice removal from sidewalks is the responsibility of each property owner under Article 9, Section 1-709 of the Anne Arundel County Code.

### **I need assistance with medical treatments, food, or heat. Who do I contact?**

For life-threatening emergencies call 911. For more information about transportation to medical treatments such as dialysis, or for food or heat emergencies, contact the County's Office of Emergency Management at 410-222-0600.