

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS – SNOW (Updated 1/2021)

There are over 600 lane miles in the City of Prescott to be plowed. The average winter storm of four to six inches of snow requires a minimum of two days plowing after the snow has stopped falling to clear a path on all streets. The arterial and collector streets must be plowed continually to provide for emergency access; local street plowing may not begin until after the snow has stopped. Please do all you can to help the City do its job.

When is it okay to park on my street again after it's been plowed?

You may park on the street as soon as it has been completely plowed to the curb, or its full width. Be careful as it may take the plows more than one pass to get the job done completely. As long as the storm continues, it is unwise to park on the street.

Whom may I call if I have a suggestion, complaint, or request?

For normal snow plowing operations call 777-1126. For medical, fire or police emergencies, call 911.

Why did they plow only half of the street, and when will they plow the other half?

Our purpose is to allow access to as many streets as possible. It is not possible to plow curb-to-curb during a storm. Plows will return as time, manpower and the storm permit.

Why did the snowplow leave a ridge in front of my driveway, and why is it my responsibility to get rid of it?

The ridge left behind as the snowplow passes is called a windrow. It is higher than the undisturbed snow level. A windrow cannot be avoided. The City does not have resources to remove windrows therefore it becomes the property owners' responsibility to create access to the driveway.

Why can't the snowplow operators put the snow in the center of the road to avoid berms in our driveway?

If minimum-width (such as in residential areas) traffic lanes are to be kept open, there is not enough room in the center of the roads for snow. Roads need to be cleared for emergency vehicle access, and narrow roads already limit their access.

Placing snow in the center of the roadway would create several safety and liability issues:

- It would be difficult to make left turns across the center berm.
- Streets are designed to drain to the curb line so the snow needs to be pushed to these curb lines. Snow melting in the middle of the road would create icy conditions as the water runs toward the edges of the road. This would also create asphalt deterioration of our roads due to the constant freezing and thawing.

What if they missed plowing my street?

The City's Snow Removal Policy requires that main arterial roadways and major collectors be plowed first, and then be kept open, so operators may not begin plowing residential streets for several hours after the snow has stopped falling, or up to two days after the storm ends. If all other streets in your area have been plowed and yours hasn't, please call 777-1126.

Why don't City drivers put the blades down and plow all the snow off down to the pavement?

The Street Maintenance Division uses “gravity” plows that are mounted on the same trucks used all year. These plows do not have the ability to put pressure down; therefore, they are incapable of cutting ice or packed snow.

It seems like we’re always plowed last. Why can’t we be first sometimes?

That’s a good question. Our drivers follow a pattern of clearing the most highly used streets first.

I am elderly or disabled and can’t shovel snow. What can I do?

If possible, hire a neighbor or some other temporary help to clear the sidewalks, or call local service groups, churches or the Department of Economic Security for help with personal snow removal.

Can the City’s snowplow operator plow my driveway or berm if I am elderly, disabled, or not physically able to shovel?

Unfortunately, the Street Maintenance Division does not have the resources to plow driveways and/or berms of those who are unable to do so. Our primary goal is to use the resources we have to provide safe and reliable roadways in the most efficient manner possible. We encourage those who are not able to shovel to ask neighbors for assistance or hire a private snowplow service.

I live in the City. Why does it take so long for my road to be plowed?

The City’s snowplow program is prioritized on a “greatest impact” basis. The main roads (arterials) are plowed first, followed by collector and residential streets. This allows citizens some mobility within the community and keeps emergency services as open as possible. Once these routes are accessible, side streets and cul-de-sacs are plowed. With quick and heavy snowfall, it may be necessary for the snowplow to remain on the arterial and collector roads for longer periods to keep up with the snow, which can cause a significant delay in getting to the residential streets. Also, your road may be plowed in the middle of the night and, when you wake up in the morning, more snow may have accumulated.

How far off the road do I need to park my car in my driveway?

Ideally, the snowplow operator needs at least 10 feet to be clear on the side of the road. Anything less can cause a delay in snow plowing, possible damage to the vehicle, and/or the risk of injury. If the operator hits a vehicle parked in the driveway (yet too close to the road), the operator is instructed to stop immediately and call the supervisor and the Police Department, who will take a report at the scene. Do not park in the middle of the road or you will be towed. Illegally parked cars are a major cause of roads being left unplowed.

What if it snows on trash day?

Do not assume we are not picking up trash due to a storm. All containers need to be at the curb by 6:00 am on pick-up days. Leave containers out until they have been emptied. We will work until all streets have been done, regardless if the street was plowed or not. Due to snow conditions regular starting points on the routes could change due to accessibility. Routes may be continued the next day if unsafe conditions exist.

When do the snowplows get deployed and how long are they out?

Our Street Maintenance Division monitors the weather through the internet and National Weather Service. If inclement weather is forecasted, a snow removal crew is activated to monitor and observe the actual conditions.

If there is a high probability that a storm will hit within the City, a base crew will be mobilized. When snow starts falling, as observed by the patrol or base crew, our full snow shift will be deployed. This means we may have approximately 12 snowplow operators on the streets. Crews remain on 12-hour shifts for 24-hour coverage until the storm is over. After the storm, the crews conduct “clean-up” operations, where they go back and try to push or “wing back” the snow farther off the road to make room for snow from future storms.

What if I have an emergency and can't get out of my house?

In the event of an emergency, call 911. If the Police Department determines you have a qualifying emergency, a plow will be dispatched to help emergency crews get access.

How can citizens help during the snow season?

- Prepare for the snow season – get the necessary equipment, including snow shovels, snow blower, and tire chains.
- **Be aware of weather forecasts; The National Weather Service reliably predicts winter storm activity. Be sure to obtain prescription medications, groceries and other necessities prior to the arrival of the storm whenever possible.**
- Know what kind of road you live on – City, County, private or public road; and whether your road is an arterial, collector, main residential, cul-de-sac, or residential side street.
- If you live on a private street, get together with neighbors and have a plan for plowing.
- Know what is too much. If a big storm is coming and you have a job that requires you to be there, arrange to have your driveway and berm plowed by a private contractor. In the event of a heavy snowfall, you may need to have the contractor plow your berm a couple of times in one day to keep up with our plows, which are also trying to keep up with the snowfall.
- If possible, please help neighbors who are elderly or disabled by shoveling their driveway and berm.
- Do not shovel snow back onto the roadway. It is dangerous and you could be held liable in the event of an accident. Arizona State Statute 13-2906 states that “obstructing a highway or other public thoroughfare is a class 3 misdemeanor”.
- Please try not to take it personally! City snowplow operators are doing their job and not intentionally trying to create a hardship for you. They also wake up, or come home to a berm that they have to shovel as well.
- **Avoid unnecessary travel in winter driving conditions.**

City streets are classified as major and minor arterials and collectors, local commercial, and local. These are defined as follows:

Major Arterials: Facilitate relative long trip lengths at moderate to high operating speeds with somewhat limited access to adjacent properties. Major arterials generally serve major centers of activity in urban areas and have the highest traffic volume corridors. These streets are often major gateways to the community.

Minor Arterials: Provide somewhat shorter trip lengths than major arterials, generally interconnect with and augment major arterial routes at moderate operating speeds, and allow somewhat greater access to adjacent properties than major arterials.

Major Collectors: Collect and distribute significant amounts of traffic between arterials, minor collectors and local streets at moderate to low operating speeds. Major collectors provide for more accessibility to adjacent properties than arterials.

Minor Collectors: Collect and distribute moderate amounts of traffic between arterials, major collectors and local streets at relatively low operating speeds with greater accessibility than major collectors.

Local Commercial: Generally provide direct access to commercial properties. The commercial street usually has low volumes, speeds, trip lengths and minimal through traffic.

Local Street: Generally provide direct access to abutting properties. Local streets possess relatively low traffic volumes, operating speeds, trip lengths, and minimal through traffic movements.