

Snow Plowing FAQ

Here are answers to the most commonly asked snow plowing and winter road condition questions. Please look through these questions first before calling. These answers will better inform you about our snow removal policies and procedures.

Why can't you plow my street now?

We wish we had enough snowplows and drivers to take care of every street right away, but our resources are limited and so we must adhere to a carefully laid out system for clearing the streets. If we allowed our plows to be diverted each time a special request was made, our system would be destroyed and it would take far longer to get all the streets in the city cleared. To keep our snow removal operations as effective and efficient as possible, plows are not permitted to deviate from their assigned routes. Emergency routes and arterial streets have first priority for snow plowing. The remainder of the streets are then plowed. Paved alleys are plowed last.

The plow left some snow at the end of my driveway. Can you send someone to come and plow it out?

There are approximately 6,000+ driveways in the City of Kewanee. If we used all of our plows and spent just 60 seconds per driveway, it would take several days to clean driveways alone. One thing you can do to minimize the problem is to pile snow that has been shoveled from the driveway on the downstream side of the driveway. Then if the snowplow hits the pile, it will be moved onto the grass or sidewalk, not back into your driveway. The Street Division crews do not come back and plow out any driveways.

I own a business downtown. How are streets plowed in the Central Business District?

Streets and alleys in the central business district are treated separately from other snow and ice control operations because snow storage within the street and alley rights-of-way is not desirable. Snow plowing procedures are utilized to the extent that storage of snow along the traveled portion of the roadway will not inhibit vehicle movement in and out of parking stalls. Snow removal is normally accomplished by plowing towards the parking spaces and then making piles in the parking area with an endloader.

When snow removal operations begin, streets and alleys in and near the central business area are salted. Snow is not hauled from the area unless there is an accumulation and the temperature is too low for the salt application to effectively melt the snow. Snow is not hauled from the central business district unless the streets and alleys become impassable. Snow hauling operations normally commence during early morning hours only when the storm has subsided.

Can you tell me exactly when my street will be plowed?

Under ideal circumstances, we can predict fairly accurately when we will have streets in various sections of the City plowed. As weather conditions change we often must alter our snow-fighting strategy in the midst of the snow removal operations in order to control drifting snow, ice or other special problems. We cannot give you an estimate of when your street will be cleared due to ever-changing weather conditions.

Why don't the trucks plow and salt on the way to their routes?

Each snowplow has an assigned route. If the trucks spread salt on their way to their destination, then they wouldn't have enough to spread along their own route. Plowing along the way would mean it would be just that much longer until the truck reached its assigned route.

Why don't you use the big trucks to plow out cul-de-sacs?

The varying sizes of cul-de-sacs present plowing problems ranging from difficult to impossible. A plow can easily cut an 11-foot path through the snow on a straight road surface, but trying to plow and turn the blade in a small circle in a cul-de-sac is very difficult. Therefore, endloaders with blades and buckets are used to plow most cul-de-sacs more efficiently than the large trucks. However, there are not enough endloader units for each route. The units are shared by adjoining routes as necessary. This will result in longer response times on cul-de-sacs.

Is there a reason why you can't pile the snow on the medians instead of putting it on the sidewalks?

As we plow from curb to curb to provide for safe vehicular flow and mail delivery, snow may inadvertently fall onto the sidewalk. Unfortunately, there are a number of locations in the city where the park area is very narrow and the plowed snow covers the sidewalks. Some have suggested that the plows should go through these areas at a slower speed so the snow will not be thrown onto the sidewalks. However, the plows must maintain a certain speed in order to keep the snow from sticking onto the blades of the plow. We do not store the snow on medians because the snow can cause sight problems for traffic.

I'm having a party tonight. Can you be sure to plow in front of my house before my guests start arriving?

We wish we could comply with all requests, but equipment and manpower limitations do not permit us to deviate from our predetermined snow plowing system.

Why do you sometimes salt instead of plow, or plow instead of salt?

Different types of storms require the use of different snow-fighting techniques. The decision whether to salt or plow depends upon the expected weather conditions. For example, if the temperature is below 20 degrees and not expected to rise, salt will not be effective. But if the sun is shining and the temperature is 20 degrees or more and expected to remain steady or to rise, then salt would be more effective. The decision whether to plow or salt is made with great consideration and based on the latest weather information available. Plowing under the wrong conditions can create a polished street surface, resulting in dangerous glare ice. The decisions made by an experienced crew and supervisory personnel are critical.

I once saw a snow plow parked in a restaurant parking lot during a bad snowstorm. Why was it there instead of on the streets working?

Snow plow operators take pride in clearing the streets on their routes as quickly and thoroughly as possible. Driving a snowplow is demanding, tiring work. Common sense and good safety practices dictate that each driver should take breaks every so often. It is dangerous, both for the snowplow driver and the public, if a fatigued driver is behind the wheel of a snowplow. It is in the best interest of the all concerned for the drivers to take occasional breaks.

Why do snow plow trucks sometimes just ride around when it's not snowing?

There are three reasons why you might see plows on the streets on snowless days. One is that every driver undergoes pre-season training. Skills must be sharpened and routes need to be learned and relearned. The second reason is that the trucks may be scanning the city for secondary cleaning or other problem areas (cleaning the streets where vehicles were parked during the plowing of the streets). The third reason is that the trucks can be salting a route that has been plowed by a truck that was not equipped with a salt spreader.

Salt corrodes my car, sidewalk and drive. Couldn't you use cinders instead?

We don't use cinders because they don't work in all situations. On a hard surface like ice covered and snow packed road, cinders will either bounce off or be kicked out by traffic. GeoSalt mix will remain a snow-fighting tool until a more cost-efficient and effective material is developed.

I have a heart condition. Can you plow my street in case there is an emergency and an ambulance needs to get through?

The potential for a medical emergency does not warrant priority treatment. Anyone needing an ambulance in a medical emergency should contact the Police Department where all necessary steps will be coordinated.

When is parking prohibited on city streets?

It shall be unlawful to park any vehicle upon any public street in the city at any time within 12 hours after a snowfall of three inches or more has occurred or until the street has been cleared, whichever occurs first. Vehicles may be ticketed more frequently during winter months to ensure that plows are able to plow streets adequately. Anyone leaving town for an extended time (holidays, Spring break) should find suitable off-street parking to avoid ticketing and towing.

What should I do if my vehicle was ticketed and towed for being illegally parked on the street during snow removal operations?

The Police Department coordinates all towing operations. If you find that your vehicle has been towed, contact the Police Department at 309-853-1911.

When I called the Street Division number to find out about road conditions, the line was busy.

Our telephone lines are understandably busy during severe weather conditions. We advise limiting your travel, or staying off the roads entirely if possible. Listen to television and radio bulletins about road conditions. Remember that we can only provide information about streets within the city limits. Our phone lines should be used primarily to alert us if a street has been missed or if there is some special problem relating to the snow removal operations.

Why hasn't my street been cleared?

Some streets can be difficult to clear snow from due to vehicles being parked on both sides. Some streets will be skipped until cars are moved so that plows can safely maneuver.