



## Frequently Asked Questions: **Snow Removal and Snow Driving**

### **How does VDOT prepare for the snow and ice season?**

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

### **What roads are VDOT responsible for clearing?**

The agency is responsible for clearing state-maintained roads. All cities clear their own streets, as do Arlington and Henrico counties.

### **VDOT has announced significant budget reductions. How will this affect snow removal?**

VDOT reduced other programs and services to ensure it could provide this and other emergency-response services. VDOT's snow and ice removal standards and operations will be the same in the 2010-2011 winter season as they were in previous years.

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

Call 911 or local or state police immediately. If they need help getting to you, they will work with VDOT 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.

VDOT 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 VDOT decide which roads to clear first?**

Common sense dictates that roads carrying the most traffic get top priority. Interstate highways and most primary roads are cleared first.

Secondary roads with high traffic volumes also get early snow-removal attention. Primary roads, with one exception, are numbered 1 through 599. Secondary roads are numbered 600 and up.

Snow emergency routes are key among the top priorities. Localities designate these highways for immediate snow removal so emergency vehicles can use them. Once the snow stops and main roads are clear, residential streets will be sanded or plowed.

### **I sometimes see VDOT 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 and sand. 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, VDOT 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 within 48 hours after a storm ends. VDOT snow-removal crews work around the clock until conditions are safe for traveling. At night, hills and trouble spots are covered with abrasives, such as sand, cinders or fine stone. Beginning around 4 a.m., crews prepare the roads for rush-hour traffic.

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

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.

## Snow Removal and Snow Driving (continued)

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

Putting salt on roads before snow falls wastes time and money since the salt can blow 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 27 degrees, salt will not melt the snow and ice. In this case, other methods are used, including abrasives to aid traction and calcium chloride to melt the ice and snow.

### Are studded snow tires allowed in Virginia?

Studded snow tires are permitted in Virginia, but only from Oct. 15 to April 15. The Virginia Code says:

§ 46.2-1044. Cleats, etc., on tires; chains; tires with studs.

*No tire on a vehicle moved on a highway shall have on its periphery any block, stud, flange, cleat, spike, or any other protuberance of any material other than rubber which projects beyond the tread of the traction surface of the tire. It shall be permissible, however, to use on the highways farm machinery having protuberances which will not injure the highway and to use tire chains of reasonable proportions when required for safety because of snow, ice, or other conditions tending to cause a vehicle to slide or skid. It shall also be permissible to use on any vehicle whose gross weight does not exceed 10,000 pounds tires with studs which project no more than one-sixteenth of an inch beyond the tread of the traction surface of the tire when compressed if the studs cover no more than three percent of the traction surface of the tire.*

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

You can call 511 or visit [www.511Virginia.org](http://www.511Virginia.org) to learn about road conditions in any area of the state. Winter weather road conditions will also be available on Twitter; however, VDOT reminds motorists that texting while driving is a secondary traffic offense in Virginia. Do not text and drive.

TTY users can call 711 for the service.

You can also view our road information and conditions, or call 511.

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

There is no such list. If the road is a state road, VDOT is responsible for clearing it.

### Who is responsible for clearing my sidewalk?

You are. VDOT does not remove snow from sidewalks, concentrating instead on making the roads safe.