



INFORMATION ON SNOW REMOVAL AND DRIVING SAFETY

During the winter months, snow removal is the primary responsibility of the La Plata County Road and Bridge Department. To keep over 600 miles of county roads clear, County Road and Bridge crews drive in excess of 1,500 miles for every winter snow storm. (This does not include state highways, such as 160, 550, 140, 151 and 172, any roads within municipalities or private roads.) Particularly during heavy snow storms, this can be a daunting task.

For snow removal and maintenance purposes, the County is divided into four districts, each with its own Road and Bridge crew or "team." County roads in the 100s are in District I (Marvel 970-588-3312), county roads in the 200s are in District II (Durango 970-382-6421), county roads in the 300s are in District III (Ignacio 970-382-6426) and county roads in the 500s are in District V (Bayfield 970-382-6420). During the winter months, Road & Bridge teams are working or on call for work seven days a week.

Snow Removal Priorities

Our main county roads are vital to public safety and the smooth flow of traffic, and therefore, receive priority maintenance; these roads include County Roads 240, 501, 141, 210 and 310/318. During winter storms, many of our high-traffic paved roads are plowed and sanded several times a day, as conditions require. Gravel roads served by motor graders are generally plowed once per day. Low-volume roads are not plowed until major roadways have been cleared.

The county road right-of-way averages 30 feet from the centerline of the roadway. This area is needed for snow storage, drainage and signage. At times, it is necessary to plow snow well off the road into the right-of-way to make room for the next storm. Homeowners and residents should be cautious about landscaping and placing objects in the right-of-way (such as mailboxes and trash containers), which could be damaged by snowplows. While snowplow drivers are careful to avoid contact with items in the right-of-way whenever possible, citizens are solely responsible for any damage which may result to mailboxes, trash containers or other items which are located in the County right-of-way and obstruct snowplows. This is both a safety and efficiency issue: plowing your roads takes longer when snowplow drivers must work around obstructions. The Road and Bridge Department can suggest a mailbox post design that allows adequate clearance for snowplow wings.

Parking & Driveways

Homeowners and residents are responsible for maintaining their own driveways and parking areas, but in doing so, should avoid plowing or blowing snow onto county roads. Winter snow compounds parking problems for all; however, citizens must be aware that it is unlawful to park on county roads and county rights-of-way, if the parked vehicle obstructs snow removal activities. Cars parked or abandoned on the roadway and in rights-of-way make it nearly impossible to adequately clear snow from roads; therefore, parked or abandoned cars, which are an obstruction to County snowplows, may be towed at the owner's expense.

Driving Tips

Motorists should exercise caution around snowplows. Do not follow the plow too closely and avoid driving in the snowplow operator's "blind spots" on the sides of the plow. Remember, not only are snowplow operators responsible for operating a very large piece of machinery, they are also negotiating the same snowy, icy roadway that you are traveling. If you pass a snowplow, make sure you have adequate time and space to pass safely.

Take the following precautions to ensure that you arrive at your destination safely:

- Allow more travel time on winter roads.
- Reduce your speed. Poor visibility, icy corners and heavy traffic may make it necessary for drivers to slow down.
- Prepare your vehicle properly, especially for mountain driving. Windshield wipers and tires should be checked and replaced as necessary. Inadequate visibility and poor traction are the cause of many accidents.
- Take a little extra time to clear the snow from your windshield and lights before driving. Make it easy for yourself to see and for others to see you.
- Keep a few emergency provisions in the trunk of your car, such as a small shovel, flashlight, blanket or sleeping bag, and snacks.
- For updated Southwest Colorado highway conditions, call the Colorado State Patrol/State line at 877-315-ROAD (7623) or visit www.cotrip.org.
- Be a patient and courteous driver.