

Frequently Asked Questions About Snow Removal on County Roads:

1. How large is the road network under County summer/winter maintenance jurisdiction?
 - a. Klamath County Public Works oversees maintenance jurisdiction on 850 mile of paved and gravel roads. For reference, 850 miles of roadway is roughly equal to the distance between Klamath Falls and San Diego, California. Some of our roadways in the suburban area can have upwards of 5,000 vehicles per day. The suburban roads total approximately 90 miles of roadway (10 percent of our overall system). The County does not plow or sand City or State Highway roads due to liability. The County does not plow or sand private roads or non-County maintained public roads.
2. What are the County's resources for winter maintenance?
 - a. The County has limited resources and budget for both winter and summer maintenance activities. We have 13 snow plow trucks with sander boxes routes and 7 road grader routes (no sand applied). We have a 1:1 ratio of equipment operators to routes.
3. What are the County's hours of operation during the winter?
 - a. Our normal work hours during the winter is 7:00am to 3:30pm Monday through Friday. We do not have the resources or budget to provide 7 days a week or 24 hours a day service coverage. We can extend the normal working hours with overtime by starting as early as 4am and finishing as late as 4pm (12 hour day). We do not provide 24 hour plow services, the most we can provide in a single shift is 12 hours from 4am to 4pm.
4. Why is plowing and sanding important? How much does the County spend each winter plowing roads?
 - a. Plowing and sanding roads is important for transportation related services such as school buses, getting citizens to/from work, emergency services (fire fighters, police, ambulance, etc.). Average annual snow removal costs are around \$700,000 per year. Every 5 or so years we have a winter that costs more than \$1,000,000. The highest amount spent on snow removal in the last 20 years was \$1,800,000 (adjusted to 2018 dollars).
5. What can impact the County's ability to plow/sand a County road?
 - a. Our County is large (110 miles north/south and 70 miles east/west) and our crews cannot be everywhere at once. Sick leave, varying weather conditions, emergencies in other parts of the County, accidents, down trees, down power lines, equipment breakdowns, etc. impact the day to day schedules of our crews. In many instances we have snow plow/sander routes that exceed 100 miles in total length. In heavy snow conditions it might take the entire day to make one pass with a snow plow or grader.
6. What is the cost per hour for typical plow/sand/grader operations?
 - a. Non-overtime the cost to mobilize equipment, materials, labor, etc. for all routes exceeds \$4,000 per hour (upwards of \$5,000 per hour for overtime).
7. Why does Klamath County have the current policy for snow removal?
 - a. Klamath County funds road/bridge maintenance and snow removal with funding from the State Gas Tax. Klamath County does not receive dedicated revenue for snow removal. Therefore, costs for snow removal are subtracted from the operating budget and the bank account declines and there isn't an investment into our road/bridge network. In severe winter years the funding used for snow removal can impact (reduce) the available funds for maintenance (less money available for overlays, chip seals, bridge repairs, etc.)

8. Why does the suburban area only get plowed when it receives 4 inches or more of snow?
 - a. Most of our crews are dedicated to rural routes. We have two small pickup trucks with sander boxes and front plows for the suburban area. The suburban routes primary objective is to plow/sand intersections. We start with the higher traffic areas (Arterials and Collectors) and work our way to local streets (dead ends or limited use) as time permits. We only plow the suburban area when there is 4 inches or more of snow and the long term forecast is for more cold temperatures and snow. The reason for this protocol is that when snow is removed from a roadway it causes a berm on the edge of the roads. The berm freezes and blocks approximately 20,000 peoples driveways. We have the ability to hire a contractor to clear driveways but it is very expensive (depending on the level of effort can be between \$1,000 and \$3,000 per hour) and takes many days of effort to work through the system. The cost for contractors combined with the \$4,000 to \$5,000 per hour for County crews results in \$5,000 to \$8,000 when both contractors and County crews are working. When driveways need to be cleared it costs the County between \$100,000 and \$200,000 depending on the depth/volume of snow.
9. How does the County gear up to perform plow/sand roads?
 - a. We sometimes base next day's plan on the weather forecast. Although it can be a bit of a challenge (and expensive) if we gear up to start at 4 am and the storm doesn't produce snow until 3pm. We prefer to base our efforts on snow on the ground that away we don't waste time/money having folks called in when it isn't snowing.
10. Does the County plow/sand on the weekends?
 - a. Yes, in some cases we do plow/sand on weekends. It is paid overtime and becomes expensive. We have had it snow 40 straight days in some winters. This becomes exhausting for our crews, working 7 days a week up to 12 hours a day.
11. What types of storm events cause impact the County's ability to plow/sand roads?
 - a. Storms that produce snow late in the afternoon or overnight can be problematic. In most cases we stop snow plowing around 4pm. If it is predicted to snow heavy overnight we would schedule crews to start at 4am the next day. That away we can get most roads cleared for morning commutes to work and for school buses/emergency services.

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