

Tuolumne County Snow Removal Policy

The Tuolumne County Public Works Road Operations Division would like to take this opportunity to remind visitors and residents of the county about the basic snow removal policies and procedures. Snow is a mixed blessing in that it provides residents and visitors to the county the opportunity for winter sports and recreational activities, but it is also costly in terms of snow removal for our county roads. Snow removal services on county-maintained roads are performed by county staff.

Parking restrictions in the county right-of-way during snow removal season are strictly enforced; your car will be towed. The county will not be responsible for damage caused by snow removal operations of vehicles left in the county right-of-way.

No snow removal services are performed by county forces on private roads or County Service Area roads. Private road residents are expected to provide service for their roads. Residents on County Service Area roads are serviced by a private contractor to the county.

The State (Caltrans) provides snow removal services on State highways/routes such as SR 108, SR 120, and SR 49.

The Department of Public Works offices are open Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. and can be contacted at (209) 533-5601; the Public Works counter at 48 Yaney Avenue, Sonora is open to the public Monday through Thursday from 8:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. In the event of an emergency on weekends, evenings or holidays please contact the Sheriff's Office at (209) 533-5815 or 911 who will then dispatch the Public Works Road Superintendent.

With the current resources, Road Operations personnel can adequately handle most snowstorms above 4,000 feet elevation provided low elevation issues such as downed trees and flooding are minimal. With low snow levels and/or other problems, snow removal service can be less than adequate.

Resource constraints do not permit a "bare pavement" snow removal policy. Snow removal will be accomplished by one shift, operating primarily during daylight hours. Ice control, and limited snow removal may be provided during early morning hours, as resources allow. Snow removal should begin as follows:

Normal Snow Removal Operations

- Normal snow and ice control operations are performed during an 8-to-14-hour shift.
- Snow control operations will begin when snow depths on the pavement accumulate to 3 inches during normal work shifts. Recognize that 4 inches of snow on your deck or in your yard does not necessarily mean that there are 4 inches on the roadway.
- For snowfall outside a normal work shift, snow removal will begin the following shift.

- Crowding: once snow removal operations have begun, the county will continue to plow snow, pushing it back to the road shoulders until removal is completed and in preparation for additional storms. This practice ensures there is adequate space on the road shoulder for any new snow. Unfortunately, the necessity to continue to push the snow back to the shoulders of the roads after the storm is over could create additional berms at the end of driveways that must be removed by the resident. We will attempt to complete this crowding activity as soon as possible so the creation of additional berms is kept to a minimum.
- Berms: during snowplow operations, a berm of snow is left in front of all driveways which is the responsibility of the resident to clear. Please note, if you as a resident clear the snow in your driveway into the roadway, it will be pushed back again just as it had originally fallen. There is no discernment between fresh snow and shoveled snow into the roadway.
- Snow may remain in parking areas for hours or days after the snowfall has ceased.

Prioritization for County Road Services

During a storm, main county roads and school bus routes have priority over other roads. Each piece of snow removal equipment has an assigned route. The operators will start at the beginning of their assigned area and plow until they reach the end of that area and then will start back at the beginning. Complete clearing of local roads and cul-de-sacs is a last priority.

Priority 1 – County roads with a functional classification of major collector and arterial.

Priority 2 – County roads with a functional classification of minor collector.

Priority 3 – All other county roads normally provided snow and ice control.

Unless otherwise assigned, equipment and personnel will perform snow and ice control on Priority 1 roads first on a county-wide basis, with the goal of Priority 1 roads being kept passable to properly equipped vehicles. As conditions and time permit, plowing of Priority 2 roads will follow, and so on until all county roads normally plowed can be used by properly equipped vehicles.

If conditions such as extended heavy snowfall, low elevation snowfall, reduced equipment availability, lack of personnel or major problems elsewhere to the county-maintained road system are present, a request for a declaration of a “storm emergency” may be made by the Director of Public Works to the County Administrator/Office of Emergency Services. When a storm emergency is declared, snow and ice control operations may shift from the regular schedule to assist emergency responders.

Snow Removal Mileage by Elevation

<i>Elevation</i>	<i>Lane miles of roads plowed</i>
5,000+	56
4,000-5,000	212
3,000-4,000	356
2,000-3,000	756

Notes:

- Snowfall to 1,400-foot elevation (**Jamestown**) can result in the need for snow removal on over 900 lane miles.
- Lane mile = one lane, one mile in length and includes turning lanes, passing lanes and similar appurtenances.
- Each lane mile usually requires two to three passes if the plow is to “crowd” the snow off the traveled way.
- During an active storm, additional passes over each road are usually needed. The average speed for a snowplow is about 12 mph.
- When snow is traffic compacted, numerous passes must be made by large plows or motor graders to remove the ice.

De-Icing

Attempts to shave ice under freezing circumstances have proven futile and have the effect of polishing the ice making it even more slippery. Normal ice removal will occur once ice has thawed slightly.

Salting

When ice is so thick and frozen that it cannot be cut with machinery, salting provides the ability to begin the breakdown of the ice. The hopeful outcome is the ability to then shave the ice in layers with machinery. This process is very politically controversial and is used very sparingly throughout the county.

Sanding

Roads will be sanded as needed after snowfall has ceased with a priority given to school bus routes and major thoroughfares. Please remember, sand is not a substitute for chains and does not guarantee traction for tires.

Chain Sign Interpretation

California Department of Transportation provides the following interpretation of the *Chains Required* signs:

- R1-Chains are required on all vehicles except:
 - Passenger vehicle with mud/snow tires. Mud/snow tires must be installed on at least two drive wheels. Chains are required to be carried by vehicles using mud/snow tread tires.
 - Motor trucks having an unladen weight of 6,000 pounds or less and equipped with mud/snow-tread tires.
- R2-Chains are required on all vehicles except four-wheel drive vehicles having an unladen weight of 6,500 pounds or less and equipped with mud/snow tread tires on all four wheels.
 - Chains for one set of drive wheels are required to be carried by four-wheel drive vehicles using mud/snow tires
- R3-Chains are required on all vehicles without exception.

Tuolumne County Ordinance Code Section 10.28 "Snow Removal" prohibits parking on the pavement or road shoulder during snow removal operations. There are signs posted on the roadways near subdivision entrances/exits, major collectors and minor collectors noting snow removal policies.

If you see a neon pink card, like the following one, placed on the windshield of your vehicle or the door of your residence, it is because you have items in the right of way, i.e., vehicles, basketball hoops, wood splitters, boat trailers or any other number of items. Snowplow drivers cannot complete their plowing on a road if there is the chance they will not be able to turn around at the end of the road or there are too many items in the path of the plow. Your road may not be plowed under these circumstances.

Garbage cans are another item frequently hit or plowed under by snow removal equipment. Cans should be placed well back from the roadway shoulder and ditch areas.

The Road Operations Division will attempt to keep all paved county roads below the 5000-foot elevation open but severe storms may extend response time and residents/visitors may be snowbound in these situations. Always be prepared.

To find out if your road is county-maintained, visit our Tuolumne County website under Road Operations at www.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/ or call Road Operations at (209) 533-5601.

“WARNING”

Tuolumne County Ordinance Code Section 10.28 “Snow Removal” prohibits parking on the pavement or road shoulder (the shoulder is ten feet from the edge- of-pavement for purposes of snow storage) during snow removal operations. Snow removal is complete when all snow is removed from the pavement and the snow is “crowded” off the pavement and onto the road shoulder.

VEHICLES LEFT PARKED ON THE PAVEMENT OR SHOULDER WILL BE TOWED AND STORED AT THE OWNER’S EXPENSE!

1. **Important!** Please keep children and pets from playing in the streets and on the snow berms as this is very dangerous. Explain to your children that drivers may not see them or be able to stop in time to avoid hitting them. There have been times when drivers have narrowly missed children sledding into the roadway.
2. Plan ahead, be prepared, and don't travel unless necessary. Carry a survival kit consisting of blankets or sleeping bag, water, and a flashlight in case of vehicle breakdown or becoming stuck in the snow.
3. Always carry chains.
4. Do not shovel snow from driveways in the roadway as this creates a hazard for other drivers, a liability for you, and is illegal.
5. Snowplows make frequent stops and backup maneuvers; do not drive your car behind a snowplow as the driver may not be able to see you and inadvertently back into your car. If you are behind a plow that stops, stop your vehicle in such a way that you can see snowplow driver's eyes and please give them extra room.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION, AND LET'S HAVE A SAFE WINTER. PLEASE REMEMBER, WE NEED YOUR ASSISTANCE.