



***WINTER HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE OPERATIONS POLICY  
PUBLIC WORKS DIVISION/HIGHWAY***

**GENERAL COMMENTS**

Otter Tail County is predominantly rural and has a population of approximately 58,000. The County is approximately 42 miles in the North – South direction and 54 miles in the East – West direction. Otter Tail County contains 2,232 square miles of land area and over 1,000 lakes. The terrain varies from the flat open farmland of the Red River Valley to rolling pastures and woods.

The Otter Tail County Highway Department is responsible for maintaining 2124 lane miles of both rural and urban roadway. We have a maintenance staff of 30 individuals comprised of the following: 1 Highway Maintenance Supervisor, 3 Highway Maintenance Group Leaders, 21 Highway Maintenance Workers, 1 Lead Mechanic, 2 Mechanics and 2 Sign Technicians. The County is divided into 3 maintenance areas with a Maintenance Group Leader in each area.

We have 26 plow routes with one operator assigned to each one of these routes with each plow route averaging 82 lane miles. The operators consist of the Highway Maintenance Group Leaders, the Highway Maintenance Workers, and the Sign Technicians with the Mechanics serving as the backup operators. The Otter Tail County Highway Department has only enough personnel to operate one shift daily.

This policy supersedes all previous Otter Tail County written documents and unwritten policies on the subject of snow removal and ice control.

This policy is effective as of December 17, 2013 by action of the Otter Tail County Board of Commissioners at their regular Board Meeting on December 17, 2013.

**WINTER HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE GOAL**

The removal of snow and ice from Otter Tail County Highways is the most important job confronting the Public Works Division/Highway maintenance personnel during the winter season. The safety of the traveling public and serviceability of County Highways are the primary concerns of the maintenance crews during this time.

Our goal is to keep people and products moving as efficiently and safely as possible on our County highways during adverse winter weather conditions within the limits of the financial resources and staffing levels available to the Otter Tail County Public Works/Highway. In order to achieve this goal, it is necessary to take into account questions of public policy and the balancing of competing policy objectives. Factors which will influence these decisions include cost considerations and the safety of members of the public and highway department personnel.

**SNOW REMOVAL POLICY**

Otter Tail County's "Snow Removal Policy" shall provide the following minimum levels of service.

1. Snow removal will begin, in the judgement of the County Engineer or the County Highway Maintenance Supervisor, when the accumulation reaches a point where it inhibits traffic flow or is starting to compact on highways. Normal plowing start time is 4:00 am.

2. Snowfall rates, road surface conditions and visibility will cause adjustments to be made in plowing start and stop times.
3. The County Engineer and/or County Highway Maintenance Supervisor shall make the decision to suspend plowing operations in consultation with the County Sheriff because of poor visibility, safety of the employees, and safety of the public; and to schedule different starting times during the week and weekends in the best interest of Otter Tail County.
4. The Department will be available to assist in any emergency on public or private roads as directed by the County Sheriff.
5. Personal Properties
  - a. Mailboxes and fences damaged during snow removal will be evaluated case by case. Only those mailboxes and fences that were properly located and installed, and which were damaged by actual contact with County equipment will be repaired at the County's expense.
  - b. Residents shall not plow or blow snow from driveways onto highways.
  - c. Drivers of stalled vehicles are responsible for the removal of those vehicles from County highways to assist in snow removal. Highway Department personnel may assist stranded motorists by contacting law enforcement/emergency personnel for them. The Highway Department will not attempt to remove stuck vehicles unless directed by law enforcement personnel to eliminate a safety hazard.
  - d. Otter Tail County Highway Department staff will not be allowed to transport people in snow removal equipment that are not County Employees unless directed by Law Enforcement, the County Engineer or the Maintenance Supervisor to eliminate a public safety hazard.

## **ICE CONTROL POLICY**

Otter Tail County's "Ice Control Policy" shall provide the following minimum levels of service:

1. Ice control includes the removal of sleet, ice, frozen slush ice and hard packed snow.
2. The County does not have the resources necessary to provide and maintain a bare pavement policy.
3. The primary materials used in maintaining roads in a reasonably safe and serviceable condition throughout the winter season are salt, magnesium chloride and sand. The combination of materials and application rates used to address any particular storm condition usually depends on such variable factors as air temperature, road surface temperature, snow fall rates, traffic, wind and time of day. Desired effectiveness and economic considerations are also very important. Also the availability of materials will at times regulate the level of service.
4. Controlled intersections, curves and hills will be treated to provide skid resistance as soon as practical after a snow event and as soon as possible after plowing operations are completed, except during black ice and freezing rain conditions.  
  
During these conditions, starting time and chemical applications will be as directed by the County Engineer and/or the Highway Maintenance Supervisor.
5. Treatment of highway straight-of-ways will be done only in extreme conditions at the direction of the County Engineer and/or the County Highway Maintenance Supervisor. Treatment of general snowpack will be done lightly as time and materials allow.