

Winter Weather Driving Tips

- ❄ Before you get behind the wheel, know the road conditions and weather forecast. For road conditions in Northern Virginia, call 703-383-VDOT (8368). For statewide highway information call the Highway Helpline at 800-367-ROAD. TTY users 800-432-1843.
- ❄ Restrict travel until road crews have had a chance to clear the roads.
- ❄ Keep vehicle windows, mirrors, roofs and lights clear of snow and ice.
- ❄ Wear your seat belt!
- ❄ Allow extra travel time.
- ❄ Know the road surface. Black ice is invisible and could be present.
- ❄ Be alert to potentially icy areas like shady spots and bridges.
- ❄ Keep a safe distance of at least 5 car lengths behind other vehicles.
- ❄ Stay behind the snowplow. The road BEHIND the snowplow is safer.
- ❄ Never cut between a caravan of snow plows.
- ❄ When snow is forecast try not to park on your subdivision street, particularly in a cul-de-sac.
- ❄ Keep an emergency winter driving kit in your vehicle.

703-383-VDOT
www.virginiaDOT.org



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When the forecast calls for snow or ice, VDOT strives to meet these goals.		
FORECAST CALLS FOR...	HIGH VOLUME ROADS ARE TREATED/PLOWED...	RESIDENTIAL STREETS ARE TREATED/PLOWED...
0-2 inches	Up to 12 hours after storm ends	<i>Sanding as needed</i>
2-4 inches	Up to 18 hours after storm ends	Up to 36 hours after storm ends <i>Plowing begins at 2 inches</i>
4-8 inches	Up to 36 hours after storm ends	Up to 48 hours after storm ends
8-12 inches	Up to 2 days after storm ends	Up to 3 days after storm ends
12-18 inches	Up to 3 days after storm ends	Up to 4 days after storm ends
18+ inches	Up to 4 days after storm ends	Up to 6 days after storm ends
Ice/Freezing Rain	12 hours after storm ends	Up to 18 hours after storm ends

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Northern Virginia Snow Removal



VDOT
ANSWERS YOUR QUESTIONS

The Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) is responsible for clearing snow and ice on more than 16,000 lane miles of state-maintained roads in Arlington, Fairfax, Prince William and Loudoun Counties. About 7,000 of those miles are interstate, primary and high volume secondary roads. Primary roads are numbered 1 through 599 and secondary roads are numbered 600 and above. The remainder are neighborhood streets and low volume roads. Cities, towns and some developments clear their own streets.

Northern Virginia Snow Facts

- * More than 1,500 VDOT and hired workers are available to clear snow and ice, prepare equipment, keep citizens informed and answer phones.
- * Over 1,500 pieces of equipment -- plows, tractors, snow blowers, graders, loaders and pickup trucks -- are available for every storm.
- * Materials and equipment are housed at 20 locations throughout Northern Virginia.
- * VDOT replenishes supplies after every storm.

Here are the answers to questions most often asked about VDOT's snow removal operations.

How does VDOT prepare for the snow and ice season?

Throughout the year, VDOT employees get ready for snow removal by stockpiling

thousands of tons of salt, sand and chemicals at 20 strategically located maintenance areas throughout Northern Virginia. Equipment is continually tested, employees are given special training, snow routes are driven and private individuals and companies with heavy equipment are contracted to help as needed.

Which roads are cleared first?

VDOT has a dedicated fleet of equipment for high volume roads as well as a fleet for subdivision streets. With more than 9,000 lane miles of subdivision streets in Northern Virginia, VDOT begins clearing subdivisions in the early stages of a storm.

When do crews begin clearing roads?

When snow or ice is forecast, trucks are loaded with salt and sand and deployed to staging areas on assigned routes. Crews begin treating the roads as soon as precipitation begins, and begin plowing at about two inches. They work 12-hour shifts, around-the clock, until all the roads are clear.

What does VDOT use to clear roads?

Interstates, primary roads and high volume secondary roads are treated with a mixture of salt and liquid calcium or magnesium chloride. Subdivisions and low volume roads are plowed then sanded as needed.

Can VDOT treat the roads before it snows?

Putting salt on roads prior to snowfall wastes time and money because the salt blows off the roadway. Below 20 degrees, salt is mixed with sand for traction. Liquid calcium chloride or magnesium is used to melt the snow and ice. Salt is most effective after snow has accumulated about an inch and the temperature is 20 degrees or higher. Under these conditions, the salt and snow mix, melting the snow into a slush that can be plowed off the pavement.

What should I do in an emergency if the roads have not been cleared?

Call 911 immediately. If emergency responders need help getting to you, they will work with VDOT to get the road cleared.

What are snow emergency routes and how do they affect me?

Snow emergency routes, designated by local jurisdictions, are cleared immediately for emergency vehicles. When snow is forecast, state law prohibits you from impeding traffic on these routes. These roads are easily identified by "Snow Emergency Route" signs.

Does VDOT lift HOV restrictions when it snows?

Lifting HOV restrictions is a joint decision made by VDOT and Virginia State Police. Restrictions are lifted during snow storms only when needed to improve traffic flow on the regular lanes.

Why do snowplows block my driveway with snow when they clear the road?

Snowplow operators push snow off roadways in smooth, continuous passes. The snow ends up on roadway shoulders, in gutters and sometimes blocking driveways. Unfortunately, there is no way to avoid this inconvenience. To avoid double work, try to shovel snow from your driveway **after** plows have passed. And, try to shovel the snow to the right side of your driveway as you face the road.

Why might I see VDOT plows driving with their plows up when it is snowing?

Trucks may be spreading salt and sand. Trucks may be out of salt and sand and headed back to a maintenance yard for a refill. Or, they may be en-route to their assigned area. Be assured that once it snows, VDOT crews work round-the-clock until Northern Virginia roads are clear.

Why would the street next to mine get plowed while my street is passed by until later?

Many subdivisions have more than one plow assigned to clear their streets. If the plow you see doesn't get to your street, it probably means another one has been assigned to your part of the neighborhood and will be along soon.

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

There is no such list. If a road is a state road, VDOT is responsible for clearing it. VDOT roads have black and white route number signs attached to either a stop sign or a street name sign. Before it snows, check to see whether or not your street is state-maintained.

Is VDOT responsible for clearing sidewalks or trails?

VDOT does not remove snow from sidewalks or trails. Some jurisdictions have ordinances requiring homeowners to clear sidewalks adjacent to their homes.

Why does it take so long to clear subdivision streets during major storms?

Heavy or deep snows slow plow truck progress so it may take longer for plows to reach your street. Narrow streets, hills and curves, parked cars and smaller cul-de-sacs also slow plowing operations.

What should my subdivision street look like after a major snowstorm?

During snowstorms of 8 inches or more, your street will have only one travel lane plowed initially and it may be snow-packed, making all-weather tires a must. Crews will continue plowing until your roadway is clear.