



Snow Program: 2004-'05 season

Public Works Winter Operations and the Communications Department

Timing:

The snow season typically runs from late October to late March, although the "official" snow season (when Snow Emergencies can be declared), as defined by ordinance, is Nov. 1 to April 1. All Snow Emergency communications materials will be completed and distributed the first week in November.

Key Points

- Minneapolis is always at work to keep streets drivable and safe when winter weather hits. Public Works crews are ALWAYS at work when needed, whether it's a freezing drizzle or a major blizzard. Minneapolis' Public Works crews salt, sand and plow snow on Minneapolis' 1,100 miles of streets and parkways whenever it's needed, not just when Snow Emergencies are declared.
- Our priority is to ensure our roads get cleared of snow so drivers can get around the City and our emergency vehicles have enough space to navigate City streets.
- The City declares Snow Emergencies because when we've had lots of snow, the City needs people to move their cars so plows can thoroughly clear the streets so that fire trucks, police squads, ambulances and other traffic can drive safely.
- During Snow Emergencies and as conditions warrant, the city has snow plowing vehicles working up to 24-hours-a-day to keep streets open for drivers and emergency crews.

Operational improvements we're implementing this year:

- The City has eliminated the annual alternation of the odd/even parking restrictions for Day 2 and Day 3 of Snow Emergencies. That means rules will be consistent every year. Beginning this season, the rules are locked in every year: No parking on the even numbered side of non-Snow Emergency routes during day two of a Snow Emergency; and on the odd numbered third day, there's no parking on the odd numbered side of non-Snow Emergency routes. The goal is to help make it easier for residents to learn and remember the rules so they can follow the Snow Emergency parking rules and avoid the cost and headache of a ticket and a tow. In years past, the cycle would alternate from year to year; i.e., in the 2003–2004 snow season, there was no parking on the ODD side of non-Snow Emergency routes during day 2 of a Snow Emergency; in the 2002–2003 snow season, it was the opposite ... no parking on the EVEN side of non-Snow Emergency routes during day 2 of a Snow Emergency).
- Snow Emergency declaration deadline. If the City has not declared a Snow Emergency by 6 p.m. on a given day, residents don't have to keep checking back with the hotline or

local news on that day. The City of Minneapolis will not declare any Snow Emergencies after 6 p.m. If there is snowfall and conditions warrant it, crews WILL BE out plowing that evening and overnight even if no Snow Emergency has been declared by 6 p.m. that day ... in that case residents do not have to worry about checking to see if a Snow Emergency has been declared until the following morning.

- **Testing of new materials and procedures:** Testing anti-icing technologies that are applied to roadways BEFORE the snowfall. This proactive approach has the potential to improve road conditions faster and may help us use less salt on the roads, which is good for the environment.
- **Technology enhancements:** Using “smart” spreaders. Minneapolis is outfitting five of its sand and salt spreading trucks with high-tech, “smart” spreaders that more efficiently spread salt or sand on roadways. This equipment also automatically records and downloads performance and GPS data to help us track performance levels and rates of effective application. Trucks also will be able to apply a liquid brine (saltwater) mixture to the salt as it is spread, making it more effective at melting snow and ice. In addition to the environmental benefits, all these measures help us lower our costs and better use existing resources.
- **Complete a draft Snow & Ice Control Policy document:** This will help make our program more transparent and understandable to the Public and policy makers. A compendium of: Organizational and administrative structure; Policies and procedures; Level of service descriptions, and more.

We want as few vehicles as is possible ticketed and towed. Here’s what we’re doing to remind folks how to follow Snow Emergency rules and to avoid a tow and help us keep roads safe and drivable.

- SnOasis parking ramps offer free or low cost off-street parking during the first night of a Snow Emergency. There are five snOasis parking ramps in Minneapolis to help those who live in high-density areas – particularly near the University of Minnesota and near downtown – get their cars off Snow Emergency routes during the first phase of a Snow Emergency.
- You can park after it’s plowed! Minneapolis implemented a “park after it’s plowed” rule. Once the plows have come by DURING the appropriate phase of a Snow Emergency and completely plowed the full width of the side (or sides) of the street where parking is not allowed, you may resume parking there.
- Minneapolis Police officers that are enforcing Snow Emergency parking rules will turn on their flashing red lights when tagging cars at night to help alert residents that they should move their vehicles.

Minneapolis is doing what we can to help folks get information about Snow Emergency parking rules and when they take effect.

- We’ve added a Hmong Snow Emergency Hotline, in addition to our Spanish, Somali and English language lines.
- We run instructional videos on City Cable in Spanish, Somali and Hmong during Snow Emergencies – and throughout the snow season – to help people better understand the process.

- We mail a Snow Emergency brochure to every city household and reach out to our non-English speaking residents by including information in Spanish, Somali, Oromo, Vietnamese and Laotian.
- The City Web site now has detailed Snow Emergency information in English, as well as translated into Spanish, Somali, Oromo, Vietnamese and Laotian for our non-English speakers.
- We send out an automatic email notification to more than 12,000 individuals who have signed up to receive e-alerts when a Snow Emergency is declared. New this year, people can sign up to receive a text message on their cell phone when a Snow Emergency is declared.
- We produce Snow Emergency brochures and flyers that are distributed throughout the community, including info flyers in Spanish, Somali, Oromo, Vietnamese and Laotian for our non-English speakers.

Tracking performance and reporting results:

- **Information on Levels of Service and Tracking Performance.** The City's Web site will include details on the level of services the City will be providing for snow and ice control on streets and alleys. It will give the people of Minneapolis a complete picture of what services they can expect to receive. The Web site will also include several performance measurement standards to compliment service level descriptions so folks can see how we're doing. Examples of information people will be able to find on the Web include: How long does it take the City to plow all the alleys in Minneapolis?; Once the snow has stopped falling, how long does it take crews to plow the street to bare pavement?

We are always looking for improvements and suggestions.

- The majority of Minneapolis residents understand and follow our Snow Emergency parking rules. We estimate that we have about 95% compliance (250,000 vehicles in the city on any given day ... that means about 15,000 vehicles may be parked where they are not supposed to be) ... our goal is figuring out what we can do to help that 5 percent so they don't get ticketed and towed. We want to find ways to reach as many of those people as is possible so fewer people are towed and the City can do a quality job plowing all the roads. The City will continue to survey folks who have had their cars towed during snow emergencies. City staff will head to the impound lot during Snow Emergencies and collect information from folks who have had their cars towed. The City's goal in conducting the survey is to learn more about why people have trouble following Snow Emergency parking rules and what the City can do to help people not get towed.
- We're always looking for suggestions for how we can better get the word out and engage the community. That's why we're conducting surveys at the Impound Lot. We also survey folks through the City-wide resident survey, attend neighborhood and community group meetings and work with the City's non-English speaking communities to hear from the public about suggestions for improving our work.

Communications tools and strategies

Printed Materials

- **Snow Emergency Mailer** to all 160,000 Minneapolis households. Includes info teasers in Spanish, Somali, Hmong, Oromo, Vietnamese, Laotian. Created enhanced visuals and simplified messages to help folks best understand the flyer.
- **Snow Emergency flyers** in English, Spanish, Somali, Hmong, Oromo, Vietnamese, Laotian (these will be distributed by multi-Cultural Services, Public Works and Traffic Control {both Reg Services and Police})
- SnOasis flyers
- **Utility bill insert** with Snow Emergency and sidewalk shoveling information will be distributed to all utility bill customers in November.

Web Materials

- **Home page “button”** that announces the status of Snow Emergency (declared, or not).
- **Info/backgrounder pages.** Includes flyers translated in Spanish, Somali, Hmong, Oromo, Lao and Vietnamese.
- **Prominent translations.** Web will contain prominent “buttons” in these languages (Spanish, Somali, Hmong, Oromo, Lao and Vietnamese) so it’s easy for non-English speakers to find the info in their languages.
- **Encourage E-Alert Sign-ups!** Web site will continue to encourage folks to sign up to receive automatic a email alert messages whenever Snow Emergencies are declared.

E-Alerts

- City will send out automatic email to all (12,000 and growing!) subscribers to our email alert service.
- Now people can sign up to receive a text message alert via their cell phone.
- Including translated tag lines (Spanish, Somali, Hmong, Oromo, Lao, Vietnamese) for our e-Alerts.
- We will send a “test” email to all subscribers in late-October reminding folks about Snow Emergencies, alerting to '04-'05 materials and promoting the text messaging feature, as well as a reminder to watch for no-parking signs for the fall sweep.

Cable broadcast

- **Instructional Videos** will run on City Cable (14 & 79). The videos – produced in English, Spanish, Somali and Hmong (new) – will run round the clock (on which channel)

during snow emergencies and will have a broadcast schedule during winter months when there is no Snow Emergency declared.

- **Access Minneapolis.** City produced cable program that features information on city services for Spanish and Somali viewers; it will feature Snow Emergency information and facts. Schedule is to be determined.
- **Crawl Messages.** During Snow Emergencies, “crawl” messages run encouraging folks to call the Snow Emergency hotlines. New this year, those messages will be run in all our languages ... for Oromo, Vietnamese and Lao, the crawl will encourage folks to go to www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/snow for more information.
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Media relations

- News releases will be distributed when Snow Emergencies are declared. City staff will field media calls, arrange interviews and encourage coverage of Snow Emergency operations and efforts will run on City Cable (14 & 79). The videos – produced in English, Spanish, Somali.