

Snow and Ice

Snow and ice control is a central winter activity of the Milford Township road crew, especially during a rough winter. Milford Township is responsible for keeping 76.45 miles of roads passable whenever winter weather strikes. Our crews work hard day and night to treat the roads even in the worst weather conditions, blinding snow, crippling ice, sub-zero temperatures often sacrificing time away from their families on weekends and holidays.

These winter warriors prepare for each snow season beginning in October with a week of extensive safety training, plus equipment and maintenance reviews. All drivers review plow blade replacement, tire chain utilization, emergency procedures and detailed safety inspections. Most drivers retain the same route from one winter to the next and are familiar with their routes. This is particularly important when snow is deep and drifted. Knowing the roads and all landmarks is critical when it is impossible to distinguish where the road is located.

When winter storms become imminent, staff carefully monitors the storm's movement on radar and consults different weather forecasts to track of ground conditions and approaching storms. This enables us to quickly mobilize our crews and equipment minimizing response times.

Milford is well equipped to handle the severe weather that has come our way. Our salt shed provides storage to meet our needs, but severe conditions can cause us to keep strict oversight on our contracted deliveries. Nationwide salt shortages have been a recurring problem during harsh winters when salt demand runs high. Delivery issues can also crop up like they did in 1994 when the Ohio River froze preventing salt barges from being able to reach the Port of Cincinnati.

Milford's snowfighters work shifts to keep roads clear by salting or plowing, depending upon conditions. Snow and ice control routes ensure that every road is treated quickly and efficiently.

DRIVE SMART, BE PREPARED

Severe, crippling snowstorms, although rare, do occur here in southwest Ohio. The area is also prone to occasional ice storms which can be treacherous and sometimes deadly; however, more typical are the light to moderate snows in the one to six inch range that fall and make road surfaces hazardous just the same --- perhaps more so because many motorists don't treat these conditions as seriously.



When heavy snow or ice does occur, a Snow Emergency may be declared necessitating limited or restricted driving conditions. Motorists can check this web site for Snow Emergency postings, reports on local and statewide road conditions, plus links to forecasts and radar.

Motorists are urged to drive wisely and cautiously in all winter weather situations:

- Have your vehicle winterized and store blankets and other supplies in your vehicle in the event that you should become stranded.
- Clear all snow and ice from mirrors, windows, headlights, and taillights before leaving.
- Reduce your speed and leave early, planning your route to avoid steep upgrades and lightly-traveled roads where deep drifts may have formed.
- Drive with your headlights on low beam.
- Use caution on bridges and overpasses, as they freeze more quickly than roadway surfaces.
- Watch for black ice, which is a thin transparent layer of ice on roadways that is extremely slippery and hard to spot.

Additionally, please be especially careful and courteous when driving around salt trucks and snow plows. Remember these tips:

- Don't pass a snow plow unless absolutely necessary.
- Don't assume the snow plow operator can see you. Every truck has blind spots which reduce side and rear visibility.
- Allow plenty of stopping distance; don't follow too closely. This also reduces the chance of loose material hitting your vehicle.
- Keep your headlights on low beam.
- Slow down.



Photo courtesy of E.L. Hubbard, Hamilton Journal-News.

A SNOW PLOW DRIVER'S PERSPECTIVE

Milford's crews are sometimes asked which they prefer treating roads in heavily developed locations or out in the remote and hilly areas. There are advantages and disadvantages to each. Traffic can make your job more difficult, but the roads are more defined and easier to see because everything is so built up. However, rural roads carry less traffic which makes them easier to plow, but the drifting is usually more extensive and the edges of the roads can be harder to find. It can be kind of scary. You have to be very familiar with your route, know your roads, ditch lines, and any and all landmarks, even certain trees, poles, and mailboxes to help guide you.

HOW ARE SLIPPERY ROADS TREATED?

Treatment methods include:

- Salt
- Anti-skid materials
- Plowing

All of these methods are utilized, sometimes in different combinations, depending on the type of road and current weather conditions. Salt is used to melt the snow or ice. Anti-skid materials help provide traction and can be sand or fine stone, sometimes referred to as grits. Plowing is utilized when snow becomes too deep for salt granules to effectively penetrate.



When snowfall is heavy enough to require plowing, the time needed to complete a route can nearly double. For straight salting, it is only necessary to drive in one direction to salt two lanes; however, a driver must make two passes over the same road in order to plow each lane while applying salt on the second pass.

MAILBOX DAMAGE

Mailboxes are sometimes damaged when plowing occurs. On most occasions, they are knocked down NOT by the plow itself, but by the force of the snow as it is being pushed aside. However, most mailboxes, if sturdy and properly installed, will withstand this force. While government agencies are not required to replace damaged mailboxes that sit on public right-of-way, Milford may choose to replace mailboxes as a courtesy. Re-application of lettering and numbers is the responsibility of the homeowner.

BLOCKED DRIVEWAY

Milford offers this tip for diminishing the impact of your driveway being blocked by snow pushed aside by a plow:

When clearing your driveway, try to pile the snow to the left side as you face your house, specifically when clearing near the road. This will prevent the plow blade from dragging the pile across the front of your driveway.

WHEN CLEARING YOUR DRIVEWAY

Remember, it is illegal to push snow into the road. Doing so constitutes obstruction of the roadway and can be dangerous to motorists. Please, do not push snow into the road.

SOME SALT FACTS

(Courtesy of the Salt Institute)

- Salt was first used for snow and ice control in the 1940s, but its use didn't become widespread until the 1960s.
- Salt is used as the principle deicer because it is the most readily available and least expensive deicer.
- Salt is non-toxic and harmless to skin and clothing.
- When handled and stored properly, salt is harmless to the environment.
- Salt trucks spread 500-700 pounds of salt per mile of two-lane pavement.
- 500 pounds of salt will release enough brine to keep snow and ice from bonding to one mile of two-lane pavement.
- 1/4 inch of ice on a mile of pavement weighs 70 tons.
- Over 10 million tons of salt are used each year in the USA and 3 million tons in Canada.