



## Snow Removal in Northern Virginia

### *What's new for Winter 2010-2011*

**Early deployment to subdivisions:** Salt/sand trucks will be pre-positioned in subdivisions whenever the forecast calls for two or more inches. Previously, trucks were deployed to subdivisions once two inches had fallen. Each subdivision will have at least one dedicated truck, with the intent of assigning the same driver to that subdivision throughout the winter. In difficult subdivisions there will be more than one truck.

**Additional equipment:** There are 600 additional contractor trucks this winter, bringing the total to 2,600 of equipment (mostly contractor) available for snow and ice removal.

**Dedicated fleet for Virginia State Police:** During major storms and ice events, VDOT is providing a dozen contracted trucks to Virginia State Police. This will help ensure that State Police has trucks to deal with assist with specific emergencies and that VDOT crews can remain focused on their assigned routes.

**Automatic Vehicle Locator (AVL) pilot program:** Contractors are being offered a \$1,000 bonus to equip their trucks with AVL which will allow VDOT to track what streets have been plowed, when they were plowed and if they were plowed. VDOT is also reimbursing contractors for the \$577 unit. As of November, nearly 400 trucks have AVL. This is a pilot program that will be evaluated at the end of snow season.

**Updated snowplow assignment maps:** Each of the 650 snow maps in northern Virginia has been updated. These maps show hotspots, boundary lines, schools, police stations, hospitals and bus stops.

**Training:** Additional snow plow simulator training has been provided.

**Budget:** Last year's statewide budget was \$93.7 million; more than \$250 million was spent. This winter's statewide budget is \$115 million. In Northern Virginia, last winter's budget was \$27 million and \$127 million was spent. This winter's budget is \$33 million.

### ***VDOT roads and resources***

VDOT is responsible for 17,679 lane miles in Fairfax, Loudoun, Prince William and Arlington counties (Arlington County maintains its own secondary roads). About half of those miles are highways, and half are local or neighborhood streets.

VDOT has 18 local maintenance headquarters throughout northern Virginia: one in Arlington, nine in Fairfax, four in Prince William and four in Loudoun.

Northern Virginia has about 2,600 pieces of equipment (state and contractor) available to clear a typical six-inch storm. Some of these pieces are pick-up trucks typically used for side streets, and can clear up to 18 inches of snow, depending on the type of storm.

About 90 percent of VDOT crews and equipment during major storms are contracted. VDOT trains both its own employees and contracted staff with classroom sessions, snowplow simulators and snow route visits. Contractors also receive company training, and many have long working relationships with VDOT and are very familiar with VDOT's snow removal procedures.

Crews pre-treat 300 lane miles of trouble spots on interstates 66, 95, 395, and 495—including bridges and ramps prone to freezing such as the Springfield interchange and the Capital Beltway interchange at Route 1—with liquid magnesium chloride. Another 200 lane miles on major roads, such as the Fairfax County Parkway, routes 1, 7, 28, 29, 50 and 123, are pre-treated with salt brine.

### ***VDOT road priorities***

Roads are generally cleared from highest volume to lowest in the following order:

- Interstates (I-66, I-95/395, I-495, etc.),
- High-volume routes (Routes 1, 7, 28, 50, Fairfax County Parkway, Prince William County Parkway, etc.)
- Main thoroughfares in neighborhoods or developments
- Residential streets
- Cul-de-sacs

### ***How neighborhoods are assigned and plowed***

Typically, crews begin plowing in subdivisions when two inches has fallen.

The main thoroughfares in subdivisions are repeatedly plowed during a storm. Once the storm has stopped and those roads are clear, crews work to make residential streets and cul-de-sacs “passable.”

A neighborhood street is considered passable when a path is drivable (with caution) for an average passenger vehicle. The road will not be cleared curb-to-curb or to bare pavement, and may remain snow-packed, uneven and rutted (especially following any refreeze). Chemicals are not typically used in subdivisions, but crews will sand hills, curves and intersections as needed to provide traction. For most storms, one snowplow pass, about eight to ten feet wide, is made.

Local roads are organized into about 650 “snow maps” which are assigned to plow drivers after main streets are completed. About 350 of these maps are for Fairfax County alone. Once drivers complete a minimum of one pass on the roads in a map, they report back that the route is complete.

VDOT judges subdivisions complete through processed snow maps, resident call volume, AVL and feedback from VDOT monitors.

While VDOT does not remove snow from sidewalks or trails, crews are asked to be mindful of pushing large amounts of snow onto sidewalks, driveways, etc. With major storms, it is often an unintended consequence of making roads passable. When shoveling driveways, residents should leave the last few feet at the curb until the street is plowed, as the truck will push some snow back. It also helps to shovel to the right facing the road.

To give crews a chance to finish their assigned snow maps, VDOT asks that residents wait a few days after the storm is over before reporting roads as “missed.” Once crews have finished their routes, resident complaints are mapped into a database that feeds lists of locations back to the area headquarters to double-check and address. It is also helpful for crews if residents park on the odd-numbered side of their street to allow plows room to pass.

