



TOWN OF WILLISTON

MEMORANDUM

Town of Williston
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Public Works
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TO: Erik Wells, Town Manager
FROM: Bruce K. Hoar, Director of Public Works
CC: Lisa Schaeffler, Assistant Director
Kim Richburg, Administrative Assistant
DATE: November 12, 2020
RE: Special Winter Operations

We ended last seasons Winter Operations with the beginning of the Covid Pandemic. Unfortunately, the start of this plow season begins under the same conditions. The attached is a supplement to our Winter Operations plan. It is mostly intended to inform as to what and how PW will operate under Covid. This is not intended to be an action plan but just a tool to help educate residents to the fact that PW will do everything in its power and control to provide the type of service that is expected.

The fact is that we have plowed understaffed in the past but never has there been a reason to believe that one thing could impact a whole crew. The reality is that there could very well be circumstances that will make it impossible to stay to the 4-hour schedule that we usually strive for in making at least the first pass of all roads while plowing. There could be times even for a smaller storm where it could take 6 or more hours to get through the whole town. If this does happen, we will do our best to notify residents through social media platforms and keep our fellow agencies informed. We will certainly be in contact with Police & Fire if we are in a situation where we are short staffed because of the Pandemic. Since PW is an essential service our staff will continue to work even if placed under quarantine because of a possible exposure but only for operations of an emergency or plowing. They will continue to work if they show no signs of illness. Want to be clear that special precautions will be in place so that there is no chance of spreading the virus. Drivers will enter the building and go straight to their trucks. They will do this one at a time and remain in their truck while plowing operations are ongoing. We will stagger breaks as needed and they will only be allowed to take a break either in their truck or at the shop alone. Because of our modern facility and trained staff, they can deal with their own plow operations without a lot of supervision.

As we all know this is a very fluid situation and will require that we adapt as needed.

SPECIAL CONDITIONS FOR WINTER OPERATIONS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

CURRENT SITUATION: All Public Works and governmental operations continue to be impacted by the COVID-19 Pandemic which could include impacts to our Winter Operations Plan. Municipal offices remain closed to the Public, masks are required when in buildings or when people have less than six feet of separation, no vaccine has yet been approved or distributed, and all meetings continue to use remote conferencing. It is anticipated that all operations for the entire winter will continue to occur under these conditions.

Public Works winter operations are at great risk of being severely interrupted due to the pandemic. The Town has limited staff with very few personnel available for back-up in the event that employees are sick and cannot work. It requires a significant amount of training to properly and safely operate the heavy-duty plow trucks, sidewalk plows and other winter equipment. In the past, many employees have come to work with colds and with minor flu symptoms. With COVID, some of these employees may have to be sent home if they experience symptoms similar to those of the pandemic. If an employee tests positive for COVID, additional precautions will have to be put in place, including but not limited to the use of shifts. Winter storms may occur that cannot be fully covered in a timely fashion by plow or sidewalk crews. Delays will occur and the expected current service levels will be negatively impacted.

Private contractors may be able to help but those doing winter plowing already have existing contracts in the private sector and will only be able to assist after they have satisfied their contractual agreements. In most cases, this may be 24 to 48 hours after a major storm event.

Crews may be operating in areas that are unfamiliar to them, which is likely to result in slower clearing operations and higher elements of risk.

GENERAL MANAGEMENT OF OPERATIONS

During the winter operations period generally extending from early November through mid-April, the principal effort of the Department is directed towards control of snow and ice on highways, walkways and around municipal buildings. The Department has developed procedures to

perform anti-icing and snow and ice removal operations for varying weather conditions. Personnel will respond each time that the Departments are notified or become aware that weather conditions include potential hazardous road or walkway conditions and that conditions warrant a response. The procedures have been developed over many years of experience and use of alternative methods, materials and equipment.