

# **Buckinghamshire County Council - Winter Service Policy August 2019**

## **Policy Statement**

Buckinghamshire County Council's policy for provision of the Winter Service is *"to pre-treat Buckinghamshire's highway network and/or other agreed sites to inhibit insofar as is practicable the formation of snow and ice and to post-treat its network to clear any residual accumulations of snow and ice, so that as far as is reasonably practicable it remains safe and passable at all times"*. The Winter Service will run from mid-October to mid-April and may be extended in exceptional circumstances.

Each year a Winter Service Operations Plan is created and approved by the Operational Management Board which details how this Policy will be delivered.

## **The Network**

The total length of Buckinghamshire's road network is 3,200km. However not all of it will be treated with salt during the winter season as limited resources available to the County Council focus the service on priority routes that are required to keep the general traffic in the County moving. These routes are sub-divided into Primary and Secondary routes for the purposes of prioritising precautionary salting (These routes are shown in the plans appended):

- Primary precautionary salting routes are the most important routes required to keep everyone moving; they mainly consist of approximately 1400km of the county's A and B road network, about 44% of the total.
  
- Secondary precautionary salting routes are the next most important routes and typically include:
  - Classified roads that are not included in the Primary salting routes
  - Unclassified roads serving communities of 200 dwellings or more
  - Unclassified roads with a gradient of 10% or more

Buckinghamshire County Council also maintain a network of salt bins for use on the public highway. These bins are restocked once a year.

## **Pre-treatment Actions**

The actions instigated by the Winter Service Manager are undertaken to inhibit the formation of snow and ice are as follows:

- Precautionary Salting is carried out on the Primary routes when road surface temperatures are forecast to drop below 0.5 degrees centigrade.
  
- On occasion, precautionary salting may also be carried out on Secondary routes when accumulations of snow in excess of 20mm are forecast, subject to resource availability.

## **Post-treatment Actions**

During times of heavy snowfall, and once precautionary salting has been completed, the Winter Service Manager will instigate post treatment actions. Snow clearance may be carried out in accordance with the following priorities as far as resources allow:

1. The Resilient Network: the county's most strategic roads (a sub-set of the Primary precautionary salting network as shown in the plan appended) providing through routes and links between major communities. They are also referred to as snow routes in the Winter Plan and comprise around 20% of the county's network. During other severe weather events, the Resilient Network is also used to prioritise emergency response actions in times of severe weather, such as storms, high winds and heavy rainfall, to maintain through movement along these key routes.
2. The remaining Primary precautionary salting routes and ad-hoc requests made by the emergency services
3. The Secondary precautionary salting routes
4. Footways and Cycleways in main shopping areas; other key pedestrian and cycle facilities; footways in busy urban areas serving schools, hospitals, and other remaining high-use footways; remaining cycleways and other residential footways
5. The remaining unclassified road network

## **Decision Making**

A daily, periodic, county-based forecast is reviewed by a rota of decision makers (one North one South) who collaborate on the decision in accordance with the Winter Service Operations Plan. Decision makers are trained and competent to use the forecast system.

Salt stocks are reconciled by the depot storeman on a monthly basis (weekly in severe weather conditions). Minimum defined stock levels trigger re-order by the supplier.

Changes to salting routes are normally considered outside of the winter season. Application for changes are considered using a winter road risk assessment as outlined in the Winter Service Operations Plan.

## **Training and Continual Improvement**

Decision makers and drivers are trained and competent in delivering the Winter Service Operations Plan. All drivers shall be NVQ accredited in winter maintenance.

To promote continual improvement, annual post-season debriefing meetings with stakeholder involvement are held prior to the Winter Service Plan review and update. The annual review includes a review of the network to be treated in the Winter Service.

This policy is reviewed annually and is approved by the Cabinet Member for Transportation.