

Snow Operations FAQs

DSNY is responsible for snow removal from the City's 19,000 lane miles of roadways. When weather predictions show a winter storm, DSNY personnel begin equipment readiness, including loading salt spreaders, attaching plows, preparing tire chains and notifying personnel.

When do salt spreaders start working?

Salt spreaders are the first line of defense. Many salt spreaders are pre-positioned before the storm starts. They spread a mix of rock salt and calcium chloride when a trace amount of snow, or other frozen precipitation, has fallen.

Does DSNY pre-treat streets with salt?

Depending upon conditions, DSNY may "pre-salt" some locations that are more prone to earlier freezing. Additionally, DSNY added anti-icing vehicles to its fleet in 2019. These vehicles will be used before a storm, spreading brine before snow and ice can build up.

When are snow plows used? How do they work?

Plows may be pre-positioned before the start of a storm and begin operating once nearly two inches of snow has accumulated.

Plows are not designed to scrape the street to blacktop. The plow is set slightly off the ground so the truck will not "trip" on uneven streets or manhole covers. **Remember, a plowed street will not show clear to the blacktop.** This is to be expected. A combined approach of salting roadways and using plows is most effective in heavy snowfall.

Who is responsible for cleaning snow and ice from the sidewalk?

Owners, lessees, tenants, or other occupants are responsible for clearing snow and ice from sidewalks. Snow and ice should NOT be pushed in to a street or crosswalk. Where possible, clear a continuous 4 foot path. Corner properties should clear a path to the crosswalk, including pedestrian ramps. Those who do not comply can face fines. If possible, consider assisting elderly or disabled neighbors.

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Why does temperature matter?

Rock salt begins to lose effectiveness once temperatures dip below 24 degrees Fahrenheit, but DSNY adds calcium chloride to increase the salt's effectiveness. Residents must be mindful that when temperatures dip, snow and ice removal will take more time.

Why do plows push snow to the right?

On two-lane streets, plows push snow to the right to avoid blocking the oncoming left lane with a ridge of snow. If plows did not push snow to the right on one-way streets, accumulated snow would make left turns at intersections impossible.

In what order are streets plowed?

In 2016, DSNY implemented a sectoring system in all five boroughs for addressing roadways. The sectoring system achieves routing efficiencies by eliminating redundant travel mileage between street segments on a given route.

Streets are categorized as either "critical", "sector" or "haulster". Critical streets include expressways, bus routes, streets with hospitals and schools, and other roadways to facilitate the movement of fire trucks, ambulances, police and other emergency vehicles. Sector streets include all streets not classified as critical that can accommodate a full size DSNY plow. Haulster streets include the remaining streets not classified as critical that cannot accommodate a full size DSNY plow.

How can salt spreaders and plows be tracked?

New Yorkers can view **PlowNYC** at maps.nyc.gov/snow to determine a street's designation and the approximate time that has elapsed since a DSNY salt spreader or plow last appeared. Please note that weather conditions, construction projects, closures, or other events may cause actual conditions to differ from the data presented. In addition, the maps may contain inaccuracies due to variations in signal strength and the AVL system.

When will garbage and recycling be picked up when it's snowing?

Garbage and recycling collection may be delayed or suspended, depending on the intensity of the storm. This information will be available via 311, the DSNY website, and on social media outlets.