

Snow Operations FAQs

DSNY removes snow from the City's 19,000 lane miles of roadways. When a winter storm is predicted, the same people who collect your household trash jump into action, loading salt spreaders, attaching plows, and preparing tire chains.

How are salt spreaders used?

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 at the first sight of frozen precipitation. While rock salt begins to lose effectiveness once temperatures dip below 24 degrees Fahrenheit, the added calcium chloride increases the salt's effectiveness even at low temperatures. Residents must be mindful that when temperatures dip, snow and ice removal will take more time.

Does DSNY pre-treat streets with salt?

Depending upon conditions, DSNY may "pre-treat" some locations that are more prone to earlier freezing. Additionally, DSNY uses anti-icing vehicles before a storm, spreading brine on dry streets before snow and ice builds 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. A plowed street will not show clear to the blacktop. 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 may 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 you are an older adult or disabled and have questions about snow removal call 311.



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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?

Our fleet and 10,000 members of service are prepared to plow all streets across the City once the snow level is at least two inches. Avoid all unnecessary travel to allow our teams to clear roadways quickly and efficiently.

What happens with Open Restaurants?

DSNY has trained on streets with Open Restaurants, but restaurants should protect their patrons, employees and property by preparing to consolidate or remove items on narrow streets and use snow sticks to increase visibility. In-street dining is not allowed when a Snow Alert is in effect. If the forecast calls for 12” of snow or more, outdoor operations should be removed or consolidated to take up as little space as possible.

How can I follow salt spreader and plow progress?

New Yorkers can visit PlowNYC at maps.nyc.gov/snow to determine their street’s designation and the approximate time a salt spreader or plow last worked the street. Please note that signal strength, weather conditions, construction projects, closures, or other events may cause actual conditions to differ from the data presented.

When will trash and recycling be picked up when it’s snowing?

The same DSNY essential workers who collect trash and recycling are also responsible for snow removal. As such, trash 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 channels.

