Town of Franklin – Winter Operations Policy

Adopted December 10, 2013

Purpose:

The purpose of an accepted winter operations policy is to define the scope of procedures for snow and ice control and removal. The primary objective with winter operations is to maintain the safety and mobility of the traveling public. Although financial limitations ultimately affect the level of service that is provided, every effort will be made to provide safe roadway conditions as soon as possible with available resources (budget, personnel, equipment and materials). Vermont storms vary dramatically with regards to precipitation, prediction and timing. The Highway Department will coordinate operations to fit each event. This plan is intended as a guide for "average" conditions.

General:

During the winter period extending from November 1 – April 30, the Highway Department's main principal is controlling snow and ice on roughly 44 miles of road. A prioritization of roads has been established to address winter maintenance. Resource limitations do not allow for 24 hour continuous winter maintenance service during storm events. Best management practices limit employee plowing hours. There may be reduced or no winter maintenance between the hours of 10:00 PM and 4:00 AM.

The Highway Department strives to keep roads safe for the traveling public, however, the Town does not have a "bare roads" policy. Roads may be snow covered during and following storm events. Adverse driving conditions are to be expected and motor vehicle operators must be prepared for such. The following is a list of actions (provided by VTrans) that drivers should adhere to in order to accommodate safe winter driving:

A) Slow down. Driving too fast on wintry roads is the leading cause of crashes.

B) Travel at a safe distance. Allow at least 3 car lengths in order to leave plenty of room to stop.

C) Watch for plow trucks. Do not crowd/tailgate slow moving maintenance and emergency vehicles.

D) Do no use cruise control on snow covered roads.

E) Four-wheel drive vehicle capabilities should not be overestimated.

F) Clear all snow and ice from vehicle prior to travel.

G) Have proper snow tires on your vehicle.

H) Be aware of black ice on what appears to be bare pavement.

Prioritization:

During a storm event, priority will be given as follows:

A) Class 2 Town Highways (approximately 14 miles): Morses Line Road, Browns Corner Road, Dewing Road, Swamp Road, Stanley Road.

B) Class 3 Town Highways (approximately 30 miles): Roads will be addressed giving priority to paved roads and bus routes.

C) Class 4 Town Highways (approximately 5 miles): Roads will not receive any maintenance unless authorized by the Franklin Selectboard (per 19 V.S.A. Section 302 (a) (3) (b).

D) The Franklin Highway Department will not maintain private roads or private driveways.

E) Priority will be given to intersections, hills and curves.

F) School bus routes will be prioritized as appropriate considering status of school operation, storm duration, and nature of conditions.

G) Sidewalks will be addressed as soon as practical following a storm event.

Procedure:

Using available resources and judgment based on experience, the Highway Foreman or his designated representative will determine the appropriate level and timing of snow and ice control to be performed by the Highway Department. Each storm is a unique event therefore deviations from the routine maintenance plan may occur. Decisions must be made using individual judgment based upon a current assessment of the situation. Drivers are given the responsibility to make decisions regarding snow removal and material application to keep the roads trafficable and reasonably safe while concurrently minimizing costs.

Communication with the school bus Coordinator will occur early in the morning if road conditions have not improved or are deteriorating. This will allow the school district Superintendent to make a decision, based on the Highway Department's recommendation, on whether to close schools or have a delay. The Highway Department does not make the decision.

In general, snow will be plowed and sand/salt mixtures, or sand, will be applied during a storm to keep roads open to traffic and to provide an operable roadway surface. Sand/salt mixtures, or sand, will be applied to roadway centers. For paved roads, one-third (1/3) bare pavement will be provided in the middle of the road, as soon as practical. Curves, hills, intersections and bus routes will be given additional attention. For continuous storms repeated application will be required.

Generally, when temperatures are above 20 degrees Fahrenheit, salt or sand/salt mixtures will be applied to paved roads while sand will be applied to gravel roads. When temperatures are below 20 degrees Fahrenheit, sand will be used.

Following storm events, continued maintenance will include improvement of road surfaces by clearing pack snow, pushing back snow on road shoulders (winging), removing excess snow piles within the village and opening/thawing culverts, ditches and storm drains.

Equipment:

To support winter operations, the Highway Department has the following equipment available:

A) Two tandem, 14 cubic yard dump trucks. Each equipped with a one-way front plow, wing plow and material spreaders.

B) One John Deere 544E bucket loader.

C) One Catapillar Grader

D) One Kabota tractor with snow blower for sidewalks.

Materials:

The town keeps a stockpile of sand in a shed at the Highway garage, approximately 2,200 cubic yards, at the Highway garage for use during winter months. The town also stockpiles salt in a shed at the Highway garage, usage is approximately 50 tons.

Ordinances/Laws:

Title 19, Section 1111 of Vermont Statutes Annotated prohibits the encroachment of the Town right-of-way (ROW) without prior approval of the Selectboard. Objects in the ROW are placed there at the owner's risk and the Town assumes no responsibility for any damage to objects placed in violation of the statute. Common items in the ROW are fences, flower pots, basketball hoops, ect. Recovery of damages will be pursued by the Town if any equipment is damaged due to placement of objects in the ROW.

Title 19, Section 1111(b) prohibits the depositing of "material of any kind within, or to in any way...obstruct a ditch, culvert or drainage course that drains a highway. "Snow is not to be pushed or placed into these areas at any time.

Title 23, Section 1126(a) of Vermont Statutes Annotated prohibits plowing or blowing snow into or across a State of Town highway, shoulder or sidewalk. Although this is hard to avoid, material should not be left such that it creates an obstruction or mound. Violation of this law may result in a fine as determined by the State of Vermont (presently $70.00).

Title 23, Section 1102 of Vermont Statutes annotated prohibits unattended vehicles from interfering with highway maintenance. Vehicles may be towed without warning.

Public Communication/Information:

The Highway Department does not purposely plow snow into private driveways – it is the natural result of plowing operations. When clearing walkways/driveways, individuals should be aware of oncoming plow trucks. Do not attempt to "protect" cleared driveways/walkways by standing at the entrance. Individuals in close proximity to oncoming plow trucks may be injured by snow or debris in the snow from the plow or by the plow truck itself.

The construction of snow forts, tunnels or similar structures in roadside snow banks should be avoided.

The Town will investigate any reported damage to mailboxes caused by winter operations. The Town will repair/replace any mailboxes that suffer direct, physical damage from plows or Town Equipment. Damage incurred from heavy snow coming off plows will not warrant repair/replacement. All mailboxes shall be properly secured before winter.

Lawn damage within the ROW is an occurrence even though highway personnel do their best to prevent it. Excessive damage, as determined by the Highway Foreman, may be repaired in the spring or when soil conditions allow.

Conclusion:

Vermont winters provide a variety of challenges for town highway personnel, public travelers and private property owners. The adopted Winter Operations Policy should be a source of information and education for the general public. Working together, all entities involved can help to make aspects of winter maintenance easier and winter travel safer for everyone.

The above Winter Operations Policy was duly adopted at a properly warned meeting of the Franklin Selectboard on December 10, 2013

Selectboard:

Peter Magnant

Yvon Dandurand

Kyle Lothian

Wayne Laroche

Andrew Godin