



CITY OF LE SUEUR
REQUEST FOR COUNCIL ACTION

TO: Mayor and City Council

FROM: TJ Heinrich, Streets and Parks Manager
Richard Kucera, Public Services Director

SUBJECT: Snow Removal Policy Review

DATE: For the City Council Meeting of Monday, July 8, 2019

PURPOSE

Review of the adopted City of Le Sueur Snowplowing Policy.

SUMMARY

On July 9, 2018, the Le Sueur City Council approved the attached Snowplowing Policy. The policy is modeled from the League of Minnesota Cities Model Policy for Snowplowing.

League models are thoughtfully developed by our staff for a city's consideration. Models should be customized as appropriate for an individual city's circumstances in consultation with the city's attorney. Helpful background information on this model may be found in the Information Memo "Acquisition and Maintenance of City Streets." A written policy is important because it provides the city and its employees with a consistent and documented method of performing street maintenance. In addition, a written policy provides stronger evidence in a court case that a city has exercised its discretion in formulating a policy that is protected by discretionary immunity. A street maintenance policy should provide guidance and assistance to employees on how to do their work and a way to measure their performance. (Credit Acquisition and Maintenance of City Streets from LMC)

Attached after the approved 2018 Snowplowing Policy, City staff has updated the 2018 approved policy to include notification on WCCO, KSTP, KMSP and KARE television networks. This was done in response to requests from residents.

ACTION REQUESTED

Staff is recommending City Council approve the attached City of Le Sueur Snowplowing Policy dated July 15, 2019.

City of Le Sueur, Minnesota Snowplowing Policy

1. Introduction

The city of Le Sueur, Minnesota, finds that it is in the best interest of the residents of the city to assume basic responsibility for control of snow and ice on city streets. Reasonable ice and snow control is necessary for routine travel and emergency services. The city will attempt to provide such control in a safe and cost-effective manner, keeping in mind safety, budget, personnel, and environmental concerns. The city will use city employees, equipment and/or private contractors to provide this service. This policy does not relieve the operator of private vehicles, pedestrians, property owners, residents and all others that may be using public streets, of their responsibility to act in a reasonable, prudent and cautious manner, given the prevailing street conditions.

2. When Will the City Start Snow or Ice Control Operations?

The Streets and Parks Manager will decide when to begin snow or ice control operations. The criteria for that decision are:

- A. Snow accumulation of two (2) inches or more;
- B. Drifting of snow that causes problems for travel;
- C. Icy conditions which seriously affect travel; and
- D. Time of snowfall in relationship to heavy use of streets.

Snow and ice control operations are expensive and involve the use of limited personnel and equipment. Consequently, snowplowing operations will not generally be conducted for snowfall of less than two (2) inches.

3. Snow Emergency

A Snow Emergency may be declared when at least two inches of snow has been received in a 24-hour period. Snow Emergencies are declared to allow snow plow crews to clear roadways for movement of fire, health, police and emergency traffic, as well as to ensure the safety of the community. Additionally, the snow emergency restricts parking in city-owned lots in the downtown area so that the snow can be removed from those parking lots. The start time for the Snow Emergency will be declared in the announcement and the emergency remains in effect for 72 hours or until all streets have been plowed curb to curb.

A. Regulations

- a. No parking on city streets until the snow has been plowed from curb to curb, even if the precipitation has stopped.
- b. Vehicles parked in violation of snow emergency rules will be towed.

B. Publication/Announcement. The City of Le Sueur publicizes the declaration of a snow emergency in multiple locations.

- a. City of Le Sueur website (www.cityoflesueur.com)
- b. City of Le Sueur Facebook Page
- c. The Le Sueur News Herald

d. KCHK Radio

4. Snow Plowing

Plowing will not normally begin until a minimum of 2 inches of snow has accumulated on the streets. Plowing may begin earlier; however, that decision is made based on the severity of the winter event. The timing of plowing events is tied to the severity of weather, end time of snowfall and normal staff work hours. Management uses best judgement when scheduling after hours, weekend or holiday work to reduce impact to the traveling public while also minimizing overtime usage. Snow will be plowed in a manner so as to minimize traffic obstructions. In times of extreme snowfall, streets will not always immediately be able to be completely cleared of snow.

5. Snow Removal

The Streets and Parks Manager will determine if and when snow will be removed from the area by truck. Such snow removal will occur in areas where there is no room on the boulevard for snow storage and in areas where accumulated piles of snow create a hazardous condition. Snow removal operations will not commence until other snowplowing operations have been completed. Snow removal operations may also be delayed depending on weather conditions, personnel and budget availability. The snow will be removed and hauled to a snow storage area. The snow storage area will be located so as to minimize environmental problems.

6. Priorities and Schedule of Streets to be Plowed

The city has classified city streets based on the street function, traffic volume and importance to the welfare of the community. Those streets classified as “Snow Plow Routes” will be plowed first. These are high volume routes, which connect major sections of the city and provide access for emergency fire, police, and medical services. The second priority streets are those streets providing access to schools and commercial businesses. The third priority streets are low volume residential streets. The fourth priority areas are alleys and city parking lots.

During significant and severe storms, the city must be prepared to move personnel and equipment to maintain priority routes first. In fulfilling the need to have all priority streets safe and passable, when resources are limited, plowing of all other streets may be stopped at any time so resources can be shifted to priority routes.

Unforeseeable circumstances may cause delays in completing assigned plow routes. Such circumstances may include weather conditions that endanger the safety of snowplow operators and/or safe and effective operation of equipment, commuter traffic, disabled vehicles, poor visibility conditions, parked cars along streets, assistance to emergency response vehicles, equipment breakdown, and personnel shortages.

7. Work Schedule for Snowplow Operators

Snowplow operators will be expected to work their assigned shifts. In severe snow emergencies, operators sometimes have to work longer shifts. While work breaks are not guaranteed, generally operators will take breaks in accordance with city policy, provided the breaks do not interfere with city services or operations. In addition, operators will be allowed

sufficient time to eat a meal during any shift which is eight or more hours, or as provided in the collective bargaining agreement.

8. Traffic Regulations

The city recognizes that snowplow operators are exempt from traffic regulations set forth in Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 169 while actually engaged in work on streets, except for regulations related to driving while impaired and the safety of school children. Pursuant to this authority, snowplow operators engaged in snow removal or ice control on city streets have discretion to disregard traffic laws set forth in Chapter 169, except for laws relating to impaired driving and school children safety, when in their judgment, it is safe to disregard such laws. The privileges granted herein to operators of snow removal and ice control vehicles shall apply only if the vehicle is equipped with one lighted lamp displaying a flashing, oscillating, or rotating amber light placed in such a position on the vehicle as to be visible throughout an arc of 360 degrees.

9. Weather Conditions

Snow and ice control operations will be conducted only when weather conditions do not endanger the safety of snowplow operators and equipment. Factors that may delay snow and ice control operations include: severe cold, significant winds, and limited visibility.

10. Use of Sand, Salt, and Other Chemicals

The city will use sand, salt, and other chemicals when there are hazardous ice or slippery conditions. The city is concerned about the effect of such chemicals on the environment and will limit its use for that reason.

11. Mailboxes

Damage to a mailbox is a risk that snowplow operators face during their winter plowing requirements. The city will conduct a review of each mailbox damage claim to determine whether the city has any legal responsibility for the damage:

- 1) If it is determined that the weight of the snow caused the damage, the City of Le Sueur will not assume responsibility for repair of the mailbox. If evidence shows that physical contact from the snowplow was made to the mailbox, the City of Le Sueur shall provide a \$65.00 payment to the property owner for repair or replacement. The property owner shall install the new mailbox as shown in Mailbox Policy (Attachment 1), and this will relieve the City from further future obligations.
- 2) Failure of the property owner to upgrade the mailbox to the City of Le Sueur standards will relieve the City from any further liability from damage caused during snow plowing operations.

12. Complaint Procedure

Complaints will be recorded on telephone logs. Calls requiring service will be transferred to a work request and forwarded to the appropriate supervisor for scheduling. Emergency complaints will be handled in an expeditious manner as resources are available.

13. Deviation from Policy

The Streets and Parks Manager may deviate from this policy when in his or her judgment it is in the best interest of the city or is necessary because of budget needs or other

circumstances. Changes in priorities (lasting more than 4 hours) will be documented as to what caused such actions, why the change was necessary, and for how long the change is to be in effect. Those city employees and/or contractors affected will be notified immediately by radio or cell phone of such changes with all communications logged. Information logged will include the time and date of the communication, name of employee contacted, and how they were contacted. Any changes of priorities lasting more than 24 hours should be made in a written record and the public should be informed of such changes through normal methods used by the city for emergency notifications.

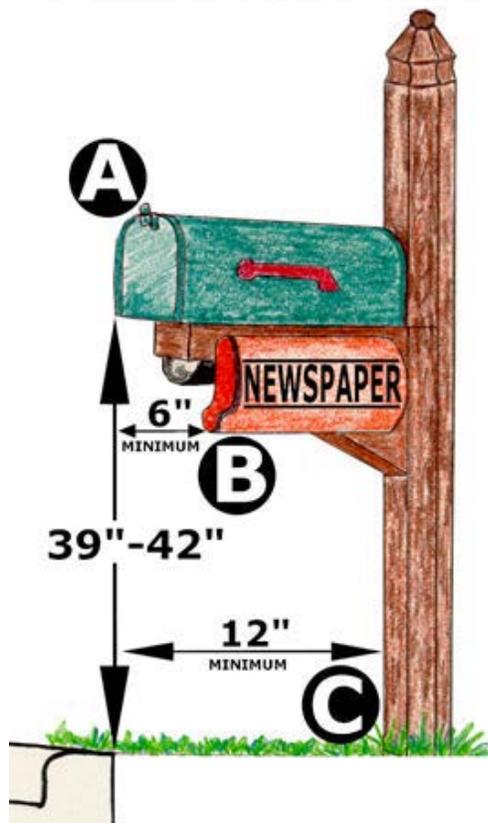
14. Review and Modification of Policy

The Streets and Parks Manager shall keep on file all comments and complaints received regarding this policy. The policy will be reviewed periodically. Any review will consider comments and complaints since the last review and any other factors affecting the policy or its implementation.

Attachment 1 Mailbox Policy

Le Sueur residents are reminded to check their mailboxes to ensure that they meet the following criteria in order to reduce the possibility of damage due to snow plowing operations:

- Front of mailbox should be flush with the back of the curb and 39" to 42" from the top of the curb to the bottom of the mailbox.
- Newspaper boxes and other containers should be set back a minimum of 6 inches from the back of the curb.
- The post should be set back a minimum of 12 inches from the back of the curb.



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