

# MENARD COUNTY HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT

## *WINTER OPERATIONS POLICY*

It is the intent of the Menard County Highway Department (MCHD) to provide safe and reasonable winter driving conditions on county highways for the general public. At the same time, the method for snow removal must economically balance the benefits against adverse effects of de-icing to highways, structures, and the environment on the county highway system. Also, the policy is based on one shift of personnel, which is limited by the number of highway maintainers in the highway department. As a general rule, the highway department makes every attempt to keep all county highways **open and passable** during the time when a majority of the public will be at or traveling to and from work. The highway department also has a part time "snow bird" trained and on call as needed.

The snow removal operation is a primary function of the MCHD. It is under the immediate supervision of the Lead Worker and the general supervision of the County Engineer. Each individual can institute a snow call-out of any magnitude that would carry out this policy.

Generally, snow removal operation will begin after an accumulation of 2 inches or more. Snow operations will begin at 5:00 AM, if conditions exist, and end at approximately 7:00 PM so that the operations may again be ready at 5:00 AM the next morning. Specific conditions may warrant deviation from these times as determined by the Lead Worker or County Engineer. The MCHD will respond to call-outs for specific emergencies (fire, ambulance, power outage, etc.) on a 24-hour as-needed basis. Emergency call-outs should originate from the Sheriff's Office dispatch.

The amount of personnel and type of equipment assigned to a specific winter storm event is divided into three classes:

De-icing Only: Freezing rain, icing conditions

A limited salt/cinder application policy is utilized. Four routes are run using trucks and tailgate spreaders to spread a salt/cinder mix at stop signs, curves, hills, railroad crossings and bridge decks. It is important to note that salt does not work at extremely low temperatures and there are times in which ice control materials are not applied. When the wind is blowing hard and the temperature is cold enough, snow will often times blow across the road, rather than build up on the road if de-icing agents are present. If ice control materials are on the road they tend to catch the snow and accelerate the drifting process.

Light Snows: Up to  $\pm$  3 inches of snow accumulation

Four routes are run using snowplow trucks only. It usually takes 3 hours to make a complete round on each route. A "round" is defined as one plow width (9') in each lane.

Heavy Snows: Over  $\pm$  3 inches of snow accumulation

Four routes are run using four trucks and one motor grader as required (available for breaking through drifted areas for very heavy snows). Holes are punched one lane wide through drifted areas so that vehicles can get through the whole County Highway System before widening out to 2 lanes. It could take anywhere from 3 to 6 hours to a matter of days in extreme conditions of heavy snow and high winds to have at least one lane of travel open on the entire system.

It is not the department's policy to secure a "**bare pavement**" on all roads. It is the intent of this policy to clear the County Highway System of accumulations of snow and drifted snow due to high winds in order to make the highways "**open and passable**" as soon as practicable. Salting/cindering of highways after snow removal has been completed will be limited to the areas described under "De-icing Only" if icing conditions still exist.

Snow removal shall generally progress in the following order of priority:

1. Clear traffic lanes of accumulated snow
2. Plow wider widths after 2-way traffic is established
3. Plow highway shoulders
4. Clear intersections
5. Check intersections and remove snow obstructing vision where snow has been piled

No time frame is established to accomplish the above priorities. Weather conditions, severity of snowfall and one-shift personnel limitations will dictate the department's ability to adhere to the priority list. Additionally, snow removal operations may be temporarily suspended if visibility is so poor the snow plow drivers cannot operate safely.