

OVTD Report: Snow Removal in The Village

By Tom Aubin, OVTD Vice President, and Mark Rhatigan, Director of Maintenance Operations

Winter weather is quickly arriving, making it the ideal time to review the procedures associated with snow removal. While this article provides fresh insight for the new residents of the Village, it also addresses the challenges and realities experienced by the Maintenance Department as they “dig us out” during the winter months. All snow removal in the Village is the responsibility of the Maintenance Department, including roads, driveways, parking lots and walkways. The Oronoque Village Tax District (OVTD) is responsible for overseeing and budgeting the related expenses.

Prior to a Storm

Prior to a storm, road surfaces will be sprayed with an environmentally friendly mixture of treated rock salt to lower the freezing point of water. The same mixture may be used after a storm as a preventative measure against the formation of glazes and black ice.

Priorities

Safety is our highest priority along with the need to provide access to our primary roads for emergency vehicles. The order of roads and areas to be plowed when snowfall accumulates to about two inches is: (1) primary roads (North and South Trails, Agawam and Midwood) (2) secondary roads and lanes (3) clubhouse parking lots (4) driveways; (5) extra parking areas and (6) if snowfall is heavy, the primary roads will receive the highest priority before plowing secondary roads and lanes.

Driveways

After the roads and lanes are plowed, driveways are cleared, even if overtime must be incurred. We understand the need for residents to have access to their units and vehicles. If possible, move any parked vehicles from the driveway and please open your garage door, permitting the plow blade to remove the ridge of snow nearest to the garage door.

Walkways

Walkways are shoveled by hand during normal working hours. Since there are over 900 walkways in the Village, the work is labor-intensive. It may take a few days to have your walkway cleared. If the same snow removal priority were given to walkways as to roads, your OV taxes would be significantly higher. Most people can exit their homes through their garage, except for some units on the southside (Algonquin, Buckskin). These units are identified and given priority consideration. The objective is to clear walkways of snow as soon as possible without adding a significant burden on OV taxpayers.

Emergency Vehicles

Since secondary roads have a lower snow removal priority than those listed as primary roads, residents living on secondary roads may have concerns about the response capability of emergency vehicles. In our experience, we have found that EMT and Fire Department personnel

can access a home in extreme weather conditions. Stratford's first responders are equipped to deal with such difficulties. If conditions are such that emergency personnel need additional support, our Maintenance personnel will assist with their plows and shovels.

Outside Contractors

If additional help is needed, then outside contractors are available and will be called by the Maintenance Director to relieve appropriate Maintenance personnel. During a snowstorm, some of our personnel may work throughout the night and into the next day. It can be an exhausting experience for some, and we are concerned with their safety as well as their ability to remain effective in performing their tasks.

Special Consideration(s)

If you have a health-related emergency, please call 911. Priority snow removal can be granted in special cases if the resident provides the Business Office with a doctor's explanation that lists the reasons why snow removal is urgent for the resident. A need to go to work is NOT considered an emergency or a reason for priority status. If traveling to work is important, then other arrangements should be made prior to a snowstorm. This may be an inconvenience for the resident, but the same practice applies in many other municipalities.

It should be noted that, at the present time, there are close to 35 existing prioritizations for "first in line" with new requests each year. Given that there are a total of 22 workers devoted to the task of snow removal it should be obvious to anyone that managing these priorities is difficult, to say the least. The most efficient way to clear the roads and provide access to the unit garages is to work in stages. Having to divert any personnel away from the staged methodology slows down the entire process.

In Summary

Our OV Maintenance employees are equipped with trucks, snowplows, blowers, spreaders and other essential items to deal with winter storms. Their work schedules can be long and fatiguing. Their efforts are to accommodate our needs in a timely manner and keep all of us and our property safe during winter's worst conditions. It is impossible to satisfy everyone's time schedule, and your understanding and patience are appreciated.

For the most part, our roads are cleared before the Town of Stratford provides the same outside the Village. It is important to note that Oronoque Village maintains the lowest ratio of Maintenance employees/number of units than any similar community in the state. This enables us to keep our taxes down.

Please be careful when walking on snow or ice. If you need Ice Melt, it is available outside the entrances to the clubhouses. Please take only the amount you need. Please remove any vehicles parked in your driveway to a community parking area before a snowstorm. Open the garage door when the driver arrives so the ridge of snow at the base of the door can be removed. Do not ask the driver for extra service around your unit. He is directed to open all driveways in a timely manner in his sector of responsibility.

Please do not call the Business or Maintenance Offices to ask when your driveway will be plowed. These calls take time and attention away from other required work. Please do not call your own private plow contractor to have your driveway plowed. Our roads, lanes, driveways and walkways are privately owned by OVCA. Private contractors may not be adequately insured or familiar with the property.

Published in The Villager magazine, Dec. 15, 2021