City of Edmonton Snow and Ice Control Program: Service Levels

Operating under City Policy C409L - Snow and Ice Control Policy, the City's mission is to deliver a safe, reliable and connected transportation network during the winter season. This guide outlines service standards, clearing priorities and how residents can work together with the City to keep Edmonton moving safely.

1. Strategic Goals and Core Pillars

The winter maintenance program is designed to align with Edmonton's long-term vision for a vibrant, accessible and climate-resilient city. All operations focus on four main community pillars:

- **Safety:** Protecting travelers across all modes of transportation and ensuring emergency services can navigate the city without delay.
- **Reliability:** Establishing clear, predictable timelines and standards so residents know exactly what to expect after a snowfall.
- **Connectivity:** Supporting a multi-modal winter network that keeps walkways, bike paths, transit hubs and roads linked and accessible for everyone.
- **Accessibility** (new): Prioritizing transportation accessibility where it's needed most for all modes, specifically working to minimize barriers for those with mobility challenges to ensure active pathways and transit remain functional all winter.

2. Roadway and Goods Movement Network

To manage Edmonton's extensive roadway network efficiently, routes are prioritized based on traffic volume, transit connectivity and economic importance. Maintenance is triggered when a snowfall event deposits an accumulation of 2 cm or more.

Priority Level	Route Classification	Service Target Standard	Timeline (Post-Snowfall)
Essential Roads (Priority 1)	Freeways, major arterial roadways and main business	Bare Pavement	Within 24 hours

Priority Level	Route Classification	Service Target Standard	Timeline (Post-Snowfall)
	districts.		
Arterial and Collector Roads (Priority 2)	Secondary arterial roads, collector roadways, transit routes and Park and Ride access.	Bare Pavement (Alleys in business districts: 5 cm packed snow)	Within 120 hours (5 days)
Industrial Routes (Priority 3)	Industrial hubs and rural roadways.	Bare Pavement (Rural routes: Level snowpack)	Within 144 hours (6 days)
Local/Residential Roads (Priority 4)	Residential streets and local neighbourhood alleys.	5 cm level snowpack in driving lanes	Within 240 hours (14 working days) once initiated

3. Active Pathways and Public Amenities

Edmonton is committed to supporting winter active transportation. Sidewalks, shared pathways and transit stops are cleared systematically to maintain accessibility for pedestrians, cyclists and transit users.

Priority Level	Infrastructure Type	Service Target Standard	Timeline (Post-Snowfall)
Core Facilities and Pathways (Priority 1)	City facility pathways, transit centres, LRT stations,	Bare Pavement	Within 24 hours

Priority Level	Infrastructure Type	Service Target Standard	Timeline (Post-Snowfall)
	wheelchair ramps and the Winter Priority Bike Network.		
Machine City-Maintained Pathways and Transit Access (Priority 2)	Remaining machine accessible, city-maintained sidewalks, shared-use pathways, parking lots and bridge decks.	Safe and passable surface	Within 68 hours (3 days)
Manual City-Maintained Pathways and Transit Access (Priority 3)	Manually cleared areas such as neighbourhood breezeways, public benches and fire hydrants.	Safe and passable surface	Within 14 days
Community Support (Priority 4)	Traffic calming infrastructure and community sandbox distribution.	Maintained progressively	As resources allow

4. Neighbourhood Snow Management and Expectations

Residential Blading Cycles

Residential blading is initiated contextually based on current road conditions,

long-term weather forecasts and when a citywide snowpack of at least 5 cm has developed. Local roads are scraped to a level, hard-packed snow surface rather than bare pavement. Snow is not routinely hauled away from residential neighbourhoods to optimize operational efficiency, except where necessary to preserve emergency vehicular access.

Culs-de-sac and Windrows

Culs-de-sac require specialized smaller equipment and are managed through dedicated neighbourhood schedules. When cleared, snow is stacked neatly and hauled away systematically over a four-to-six-week citywide cycle once a cul-de-sac event is called.

During plowing on major routes, snow rows (windrows) may be created. Windrows are selectively hauled away only if they restrict driving lanes below safe widths, block intersections, or impede designated business parking. The City explicitly prohibits windrows from blocking transit stops, crosswalks, signed accessible parking stalls and school drop-off zones.

Hills and Specialized Areas

Certain specialized locations within each service level require distinct attention, including hills, specific crossings and high-use zones. These areas are identified based on usage and accessibility needs and are prioritized within their assigned service tiers. For example, a hill located in a priority 2 area will be cleared at the start of priority 2 operations. Although this internal adjustment does not change the overall priority tier, it ensures the specific area is addressed first within its standing classification.

5. Materials Application and Environmental Stewardship

The City utilizes real-time pavement temperature data from local microclimate weather stations to determine the most effective and environmentally responsible materials to apply:

- **Sand and Chips:** Applied directly to hard-packed snow and ice surfaces to provide immediate, reliable traction for vehicles and pedestrians.
- **Salt and Liquid Calcium Chloride:** Used strategically to melt ice sheets and prevent snow from bonding to the pavement. To protect infrastructure and local ecosystems, chemical de-icers are strictly prohibited on bridge decks, and liquid anti-icers are limited to high-priority active pathways.

All collected snow is transported to engineered snow storage sites designed with containment berms and settling ponds to ensure meltwater is safely managed in full compliance with provincial and federal environmental regulations.

6. Winter Parking Bans and Public Compliance

To ensure plow crews can clear streets efficiently and safely from curb to curb, the City implements a phased parking ban system when significant snow accumulates. The City strives to provide at least eight hours of advance public notice before a ban takes effect.

- **Phase 1 Parking Ban:** Applies to major arterial roads, collector routes and business districts. Parking is prohibited on these routes until the ban is lifted.
- **Phase 2 Parking Ban:** Applies to local residential streets, culs-de-sac and alleys. Residents must move their vehicles to private driveways, garages, or cleared secondary locations.

Vehicles left on designated routes during an active parking ban are subject to a fine and may be towed to a nearby cleared street to allow plows to complete their work.

7. Community Partnership and Support

Keeping Edmonton safe and accessible is a shared effort. Under Bylaw 14600 - Community Standards Bylaw, property owners are responsible for clearing snow and ice from public sidewalks adjacent to their property lines. To assist residents in keeping walkways safe, the City provides free traction sand at designated community sandbox locations and local roadway maintenance yards. This sand is intended to be used to maintain sidewalks while they work to get to bare pavement.

Residents can report specific snow and ice concerns or track service requests through the 311 city service platform. Valid requests are automatically routed to an officer who will initiate an investigation within four business days.