

Winter Service Briefing

October 2019

What is the winter service?

Lancashire County Council has a legal duty to ensure, as far as reasonably practicable, that people can use the highways safely without being endangered by ice and snow. This means we do everything we can to keep traffic moving on priority roads and work to minimise delays and accidents where ice or snow is a contributory factor.

That is why we identify clearly the principal carriageways and footways that receive priority treatment for salting and snow clearing, and ask everyone to take steps to make sure that, when severe winter weather strikes, they are prepared and able to manage.

The [Winter Service Plan](#) sets out these priorities.

Winter 2018/19

The 2018/19 winter season was a long season and standby arrangements had to be extended to the first week in May due to the forecast of temperatures falling to near zero. A slightly milder but similar season to previous years with the coldest spell arriving in February. We used just short of 17,000 tonnes of grit, and engaged the help of farmers and district councils during the coldest spell.

Forecasting the weather

Between 1 October and 30 April, we use daily weather forecasts along with the data from our own 12 weather stations to gather information about road surface temperature, air temperature, humidity and an indication of rain, to make a decision on whether gritting is necessary.

Where we grit

Of the 4,300 miles of roads which we are responsible for, around a third (approximately 1,500 miles) are part of our priority road network for gritting and snow clearing. In severe weather conditions, we rotate our drivers so we can keep the gritters on the road 24/7 if needs be.

We always treat the following roads first as part of our [priority road network](#):

- **Non-trunk motorways and A roads** – the main routes across the county.
- **B roads** – other main roads in and out of towns.
- **Single routes in and out of all villages.**

We also aim to treat the second most important roads during periods of **continuous ice or snow**, in daylight hours and after the higher priority roads have been treated. We've also identified priority footway networks in each of the districts, and we work with district councils to treat these footpaths during periods of ice or heavy snow.

Highways England is responsible for gritting the M6, M55, M58, M61 and M65 to Junction 10, the A56 between the M66 and M65 and the A585 between the M55 and Fleetwood.

How we have prepared

- **Salt** – we have 29,000 tonnes of salt, located in seven operational depots and with the remainder in strategic locations around the county. We also have 30,000 litres of liquid de-icer available for circumstances where temperatures fall below the threshold where salt becomes ineffective and compacted snow proves resistant to snow ploughing. It will only be used on key strategic locations such as junctions on our main arterial roads.
- **Staff** – there are approximately 160 staff on the winter service rota, 53 of whom are on call 24/7. They are directly employed by the county council and also have daytime commitments.
- **Grit bins** – we have more than 2,600 grit bins/salt piles for use on the highway in strategic locations based on a strict criteria. All grit bins are re-stocked in the lead up to winter and throughout the season when needed.
- **Fleet** - 45 gritters operate countywide from seven depots with a reserve fleet of 13. All gritters are paired with a dedicated plough for use in times of snow. These are supplemented by snow blowers, tractors, 4-wheel drive utility trucks, and footway gritting equipment.
- **Vehicle navigation system** - satellite navigation and GPS controlled automatic salting systems allow any driver to drive any route.
- **Agricultural contractors** – a number of farmers and contractors who have equipment to carry out snow clearing works on roads provide additional support at times when our resources are stretched. They can be deployed at short notice predominantly for use on the rural network.

Additional resources during severe weather

We work with district councils, parish and town councils through the Lancashire Association of Local Councils (LALC) and with interested farmers and contractors to improve resilience in dealing with prolonged severe winter weather.

How much does it all cost?

We budget **£4m** per year on the winter service, however it is a demand-led service and when the winter weather is more severe, the service will continue to be delivered, subject to the availability of a wide range of resources, not least salt. We spent **£3.9m** in delivering the service in 2018/19.

We all have a role to play this winter - we're prepared, are you?

We do everything we can to keep traffic moving on priority roads and we are open about the fact we cannot grit every road in Lancashire. Even if we had the resources needed we couldn't grit them quickly enough to make a real difference.

No council does this. It is important people understand there are limitations to the service we can provide.

That is why we ask residents to take steps to make sure that when severe winter weather strikes they are prepared and able to manage.

As an important stakeholder you can help communicate our winter policies and procedures, and the circumstances in which we implement them. We need your support to help manage public expectations.

Advice for residents:

- **Find out if you are on a gritting route** - If you are not, prepare ahead of winter. [Gritting map](#).
- **Stock up on salt/grit** - stock up on salt/grit for your personal use from a range of DIY stores. It's also useful to have a snow shovel, a torch, batteries and a first aid kit handy.
- **Schools** - schools are classed as private grounds and gritting them is not a county council function. We do however give schools in Lancashire the opportunity to buy grit from us at the start of the winter. [School closures](#).
- **Take extra care** - during freezing conditions do not assume a road has been treated and drive with caution, ice could have formed despite our efforts.
- **Clearing snow and ice yourself** - there is no law about clearing snow and ice on the pavement outside your property or public spaces. [More information about clearing snow](#).
- **Prepare your business** - [advice for businesses](#) in helping them stay operational during winter.
- **Support for businesses** - we give permission for some businesses to use, at their own expense, an approved contractor to clear snow from roads that are not on the county council's priority or secondary networks.
- **Travelling safely during the winter** - check the weather forecast before you set off and leave extra time for your journey during winter. [Travelling safely](#).
- **Don't block the road for the gritter** - if you park your car on a main road or gritting route during winter, please make sure it's not causing an obstruction as blocked roads could mean we are unable to grit that road.
- **Looking after older and vulnerable people** - look after yourself and keep an eye on friends, relatives and older neighbours who may be more vulnerable to the cold weather, especially if they suffer from any ongoing medical conditions.
- **Grit bins** - how often we re-fill grit bins depends on a number of factors including weather, the number of grit bins needing to be filled, and the availability of material. Help everyone by not using the grit for purposes other than for gritting the roads and pavements in the vicinity of the bin. They are placed in strategic locations to help deal with specific hazards and using the grit for other purposes could lead to unnecessary risks to other people if the grit runs out.

Share and post messages

- Help us by sharing messages on Facebook and Twitter and promote the work of our gritting team by posting positive messages which direct people to our winter website. Gritting updates are also posted on the website and our social media channels.
Website - www.lancashire.gov.uk/winter
Twitter - www.twitter.com/lancashirecc
Facebook - www.facebook.com/lancashirecc
- **Winter bulletins** - during continuous severe weather we will also issue regular winter bulletins to keep you updated on the weather forecast and gritting activity.