

# CITY OF LAKE ELMO

## Snowplowing and Ice Control Policy

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## **Introduction**

The City of Lake Elmo, 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.

### **1. Commencement**

The Public Works Director or designee 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, full street width snowplowing operations will not generally be conducted for snowfall of less than two (2) inches. Night-time plowing will usually begin at approximately 2:00 A.M. However, starting time may vary according to weather conditions.

### **2. Winter Parking Restrictions**

It shall be unlawful to park any vehicle or trailer, attended or unattended, on any city street after a 2" or greater snowfall until cessation of snowfall and the street is plowed to its full width (Ord. 72-03).

Social media, city website and local news stations will be used to communicate emergency parking restrictions.

### **3. Movement of snow**

Snow will be plowed in a manner so as to minimize traffic obstructions. Streets will be plowed from the center outward to the boulevard areas.

In times of extreme snowfall, streets will not always immediately be able to be completely cleared of snow. Snow will be removed from main arterial streets first, starting at centerline and plowed to the curb. Plow district units will work together in the cleaning of these streets, (i.e. tandem plowing). These streets will be maintained even in a blizzard event.

For safety reasons, Cul-de-sacs will be plowed from the center outward to the boulevard when possible.

#### **4. Snow Removal**

The Public Works Director or designee 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.

#### **5. 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.

- I.** First Priority: “Main Arterial Streets” These are high volume routes, which connect major sections of the city and provide access for emergency fire, police, and medical services. They also provide access to schools and commercial businesses. Priority will also be given to parking lots and access to City Hall and Fire Stations.
- II.** Second Priority: Lower volume residential streets.
- III.** Third Priority: Alleys, city parking lots and cul-de-sacs.

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.

#### **6. 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 in excess of 40 per week. 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. After a twelve-hour shift, the operators will be replaced if additional qualified personnel are available.

## **7. 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 safely disregard traffic laws set forth in Chapter 169, except for laws relating to impaired driving and school children safety.

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,

## **8. 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.

## **9. 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.

## **10. Mailboxes and other private property**

**It is the responsibility of property owners to keep their mailbox clear of snow for postal deliveries.**

Damage to a mailbox is a risk that snowplow operators face during 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 and if so replace the mailbox. The mailbox and/or post must show signs of physical damage characteristic of being struck by city snow removal equipment. The act of snow itself coming off a plow and dislodging any component of a mailbox shall not be the responsibility of the city to repair. If the city, in its discretion, determines replacement is appropriate, the city will replace the mailbox with a standard size, non-decorative metal mailbox and replace the support post as necessary with a 4" x 4", decay resistance wood support post, both which will be installed by the city.

*\*Please refer to **Attachment #1** for tips on a properly installed mailbox from the United States Postal Service.*

Replacement or repair of objects in the right-of way area (ROW) is the responsibility of the property owner. This includes but is not limited to any landscaping, boulders, posts, fences, irrigation systems or improperly installed mail boxes as well as any other substantial objects in the ROW. If your lawn (grass/sod) is physically damaged by city snow removal equipment repairs will be made with black dirt and grass seed in the spring.

## **11. Garbage and Recycling Containers**

Please do not place garbage or recycling containers in the street during a snow fall event until your street is plowed to full width. Containers can be placed in your driveway adjacent to the street and still be accessible for pick-up.

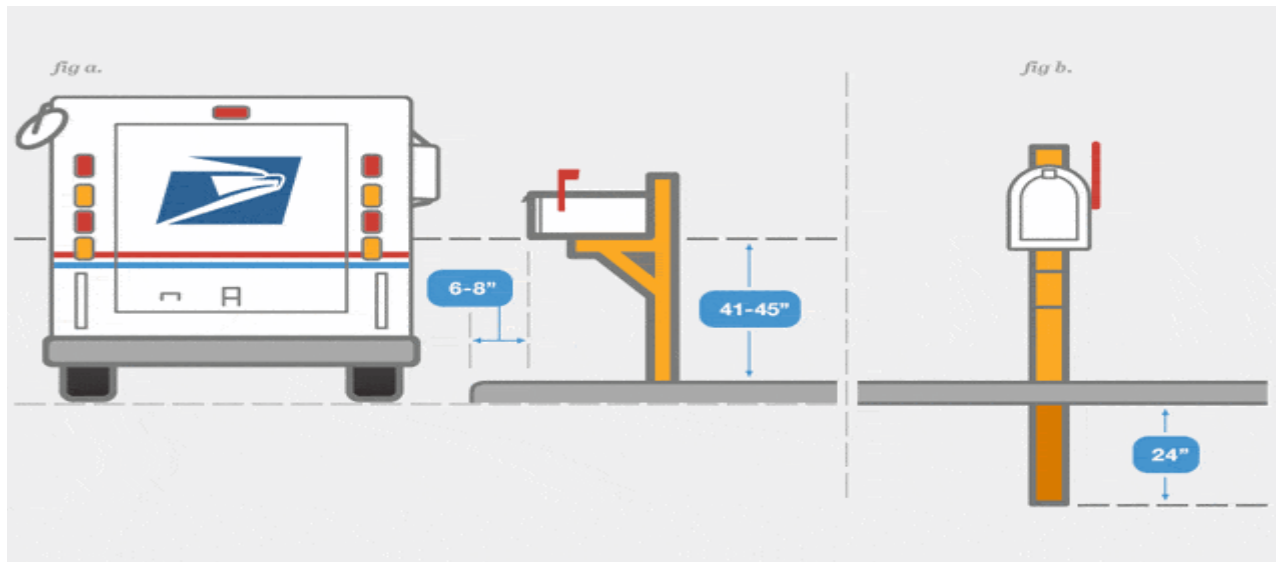
## **12. Fire Hydrants**

Residents are encouraged to help the Public Works Department and Fire Department by clearing snow away from fire hydrants. This will allow the Fire Department adequate access to the hydrant in the event of an emergency. We ask you to clear the snow in a 5' area around the fire hydrant.

## **13. Deviation from Policy**

The Public Works Director or designee 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.

## **Attachment #1**



### **Placing the Mailbox**

Here are some helpful guidelines to follow when installing your mailbox:

- Position your mailbox 41" to 45" from the road surface to the bottom of the mailbox or point of mail entry.
- Place your mailbox 6" to 8" back from the curb. If you do not have a raised curb, contact your local postmaster for guidance.
- Put your house or apartment number on the mailbox.
- If your mailbox is on a different street from your house or apartment, put your full street address on the box.
- If you are attaching the box to your house, make sure the postal carrier can reach it easily from your sidewalk, steps, or porch.

### **Installing the Post**

The best mailbox supports are stable but bend or fall away if a car hits them. The Federal Highway Administration recommends:

- A 4" x 4" wooden support or a 2"-diameter standard steel or aluminum pipe.
- Avoid unyielding and potentially dangerous supports, like heavy metal pipes, concrete posts, and farm equipment (e.g., milk cans filled with concrete).
- Bury your post no more than 24" deep.