



Highways & Transportation

Winter Service Policy 2020/2021

Introduction

This policy states the approach of the City and County of Swansea for the highways winter maintenance service.

Winter service operations on the road network of the City and County of Swansea are based upon the principles of the winter service section of Well Maintained Highways - Code of Practice for Highway Maintenance Management, published in July 2005 and subsequent amendments, except as noted below.

The current Appendix H on Winter Service is not adopted. Following comments and concerns by many Winter Service providers nationally a review is currently being undertaken by the National Winter Service Research Group (NWSRG), who developed the guidance.

As such, together with all other Welsh Authorities we do not intend to fully adopt this guidance until this review is complete. This Authority will contribute to the review via feedback submitted through the County Surveyors Society (Wales).

Policy

1. Responsibilities

The City and County of Swansea in its capacity as Highway Authority is responsible for winter service activities on all adopted roads (except the M4 Motorway) within its boundaries.

The Director of Place has devolved the planning and execution of the winter service activity to the Head of Service via the Group Leader Neighbourhood Working.

The City and County of Swansea has implemented a Winter Service Plan and Policy to ensure so far as is reasonably practical, that safe passage along its highways is not endangered by snow or ice, in accordance with the statutory duty under the Highways Act 1980 as amended by the Railways and Transport Act 2003.

This Winter Service Policy will be reviewed, formally approved by the Head of Service, and reviewed annually.

The core period for the Winter Service is 20 weeks commencing in the first week of November. During this period the labour force is available on a standby basis, whilst outside this period a flexible manning arrangement is in place.

Collaboration between the Welsh Government and Welsh Authorities in the procurement of weather forecasting and mutual aid of salt for the provision of the winter service currently takes place.

2. Priorities

The City and County of Swansea pre-salt approximately 43% of the Authorities Roads. There are not sufficient resources to treat all roads therefore the highway network is prioritised for treatment. These routes are available for public information on the Authority internet.

The Highway Duty Manager is responsible for deciding on any actions required in accordance with the operational guidance notes.

First priority winter service is undertaken on Strategic Routes, Main Distributors, Secondary Distributors and Link Roads. Access routes to emergency service depots are also given priority. Main bus routes are also treated and bus companies are consulted on coverage annually. Any situation involving danger to life will over-ride this policy.

In the event that severe snow is forecast two additional secondary gritting routes will be enacted as required, if available resources allow.

Treatment of pedestrianised areas and footways will be instigated on a reactive needs basis only, following real time inspections. Resources do not allow routine salting of footways/car parks even in areas of high footfall or for example at bus stops. Inspections are carried out at the discretion of the Duty Manager on a sample of areas across the Authority. These areas have been selected to give a good overall sample of the footway condition across the network. The Inspections are recorded and are logged in the Highways Management system.

Snow ploughing when necessary will be prioritised on a needs basis, and will concentrate on a reduced network of Strategic Routes, hospitals and other emergency services, and major transport interchanges.

In the event of severe snowfall over an extended period of time, priorities will be set on a daily basis. An action group established at Clydach Depot will coordinate the workforce, additional resources commissioned for snow clearance and public response in accordance with the appropriate level of the Winter Resilience Business Continuity Plan. Snow clearance on footways will be targeted initially on the urban centres.

3. Weather Information

A daily forecast is received from the City and County's Meteorological Contractor through the period 1st October to 30th April this information is provided on a dedicated basis for any salt action.

Weather information and any actions are posted on the internet for public information and tweeted accordingly.

The Duty Manager is on call 24 hours and is able to receive 24 hour real-time updates should warnings occur.

Following the receipt of a forecast the Duty Manager will update any actions planned.

The Authority has installed Vaisala "Icecast Road Weather Information Stations" at 4 locations;

Gors Avenue	Townhill
B4247/Monksland Road	Scurlage
Heol-y-Mynydd	Garnswllt
A4067 Neath Road	Morrison

These stations are serviced, maintained, and calibrated annually by Vaisala. Remote calibration checks are also made during the Winter Season. The Authority now has access to weather data from the Welsh Government Weather Station at M4 "Felindre" as part of the All Wales Network – Contract, Weather Forecasting.

4. Resources

There will be 6 Managers and 6 Supervisors available 24hrs a day on a 6 weekly rotational basis.

Six gritters and two reserve vehicles deployed for salt spreading, these will be maintained at operational level and available for use at any time.

2 Hiltip "pick up" salt spreaders are available for hard to reach areas.

All gritting vehicles are calibrated.

The emergency vehicle maintenance repair service is provided by the Central Transport Unit. All specialist vehicles are calibrated and monitored by Econ UK Ltd.

Manually propelled barrow type salt spreaders are utilised for gritting large areas of pedestrian footways when required.

Deployment of the 2 Hiltip "pick up" salt spreaders will be on a reactive basis.

All footway gritting will be on a reactive basis.

All authority 4 wheel drive vehicles will be controlled by the Central Transport Unit and distributed as required in emergency conditions.

5. Rock Salt

The Welsh Government has set a resilience level of 1.5* the average use over the previous 6 years. This equates to a reserve of 4,200 tonnes.

The City and County of Swansea has a storage capacity of 1200 tonnes at Highways Depot, Players Industrial Estate, Clydach. In addition, a strategic stockpile of 3000 tonnes is maintained at Fabian Way. This equals the levels recommended.

Salt is supplied by Irish Salt Sales through the All Wales Salt Framework Contract.

City & County of Swansea is signed up in principal to All Wales strategic stockpile which gives additional resilience over and above City & County of Swansea stock holding.

In times of extended severe winter conditions, the Authority will liaise with the Welsh Government with regard to salt stock to ensure adequate provision and will collaborate with other highway authorities.

There is no statutory requirement to provide salt to other users however the Authority has established links with other agencies and internal departments and will provide salt at cost as long as there is no risk to the supplies needed for the road network. Other council services are contacted mid-summer and offered support with winter procurement. The Winter Service is not responsible for resupplying facilities/schools and the like during adverse weather, but will assist where resources allow.

Should salt supplies be threatened the service has set minimum levels at which point reactive or non essential use of salt will be stopped*.

800 tonnes: stop supplying other departments and stop refilling grit bins.

500 tonnes: stop Supplying Hospitals and Crematoriums.

300 tonnes: stop reactive salting and reduce salting spread rates to a minimum.

*This will be reviewed throughout the winter period and the use of non-essential salt may be stopped before the indicative levels are reached if salt supplies are threatened or ongoing, severe conditions are forecast.

During extreme conditions the UK Government has deemed it necessary to enact "Salt Cell" to control the distribution of salt to all Local Authorities and Highways Agencies. In Wales this is co-ordinated by WLGA on behalf of the Welsh Government, who represent Wales on the Salt Cell decision making panel.

City & County of Swansea will participate in the WLGA salt stock audit prior to, and throughout the winter season. This will be fortnightly or weekly as conditions and salt usage dictate.

6. Grit Bins

The Authority provides grit bins to supplement the routine salting of main routes. These bins are for public use on the adopted highway. The Authority currently has approximately 872 bins.

The purpose of salt bins is to enable community minded individuals and organisations to assist with maintaining access for highway users. The salt in the bins must not be taken for use outside the public highway. All salt bin locations will be reviewed to assess the degree of community benefit and bins may be removed when it becomes evident that the salt is not being used to treat the highway.

An inventory of all bins is carried out pre-season and any empty bins will be refilled. During the season grit bins will not be restocked routinely.

Reactive restocking on request is not possible due to the resources needed both in terms of labour and salt.

The Authority has to balance requests for new bins against cost, and against the addition burden of restocking. All requests for new bins are risk assessed and prioritised based on factors such as site topography, bus routes, priority location (school etc), accident statistics and distance to nearest existing bin.

Prior to any bins being replaced (through theft or damage) site location criteria (risk assessment) will be revisited to ascertain the continuous need for bin placement at that site.

Community Councils and Swansea Bid have been supplied larger 1.5 tonne lockable bins to allow salt to be spread by the communities (for Highway use) participating in accordance with the Snow Warden scheme.

7. Operational

The operation will be managed from the Highways Depot in Clydach.

In Severe Weather Conditions, whiteout or prolonged freezing situation the Group Leader and or Duty Manager will liaise with the Head of Service Highways and Transportation and activate the Business Continuity Plan.

More men and machines will be mobilised as available within the Department. A protocol has been established with Parks Operations to make staff available when conditions dictate. This includes supervisory staff and if necessary others may be mobilised from within the Private Sector.

When the Business Continuity Plan is activated, direct liaison will be established with the Police at Western Area Control Room, Swansea (01792 456999 – Extension 230). The Group Leader Neighbourhood Working will liaise with Bronze Inspector over any contentious issues, i.e. road closures. When necessary a Highways Officer will be based in Police Control to assist in operational arrangements as required.

8. Joint Working

Current cross border gritting agreements have been withdrawn under agreement with Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council.

Those roads previously gritted through this arrangement will now be treated by City & County of Swansea Council operations.

No cross boundary gritting arrangements are in place with Carmarthenshire County Council.

This Authority will participate in mutual aid arrangements as appropriate to ensure critical services are maintained.



Policy document approved by:

Stuart Davies
Head of Highways & Transportation