

RESOLUTION NO. 3143
WINTER ROADWAY OPERATIONS PLAN

WHEREAS, the BOARD OF RAVALLI COUNTY COMMISSIONERS wish to adopt a Winter Roadway Operations Policy to serve as a guide for winter roadway operations and to inform roadway users of the process through which winter roadway situations will be addressed; and

WHEREAS, The Board met on November 7, 2013, to discuss winter roadway operations as an established and consistent policy;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, the BOARD OF RAVALLI COUNTY COMMISSIONERS hereby adopts the Winter Roadway Operations Policy as attached to this Resolution.

BOARD OF RAVALLI COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
PASSED AND APPROVED THIS 7TH DAY OF NOVEMBER, 2013

Return: Commissioners

Jeff Burrows
Jeff Burrows, Chairman

Suzy Foss
Suzy Foss, Member

Greg Chilcott
Greg Chilcott, Member

J.R. Iman
J.R. Iman, Member

Ron Stoltz
Ron Stoltz, Member

Attest: Regina Plettenberg
Clerk & Recorder



RAVALLI COUNTY, MONTANA
ROAD & BRIDGE DEPARTMENT

POLICY

WINTER ROADWAY OPERATIONS

OVERVIEW

With the advent of another winter season in the Bitterroot Valley comes the possibility of snow, freezing rain, slippery roadways, and valley residents' concern about access to work, school, recreation and other winter activities.

Ravalli County has adopted this policy to serve as a guide for winter roadway operations and to inform roadway users of the process through which winter roadway situations will be addressed. The safety of the county's roadway users is the paramount concern of the Ravalli County Road & Bridge Department. Our goal is to operate county roadways in a reasonably safe condition and to provide such service in an effective and environmentally responsible manner.

Ravalli County is responsible for the operation of approximately 650 miles of county roadways, from major collector roadways carrying over 3,000 vehicles per day to dead-end gravel roadways carrying fewer than twenty. In order to maximize the county's resources, we have established a system of priority routes that provide reasonable access to critical facilities, emergency services and trunk highways. These priority routes will be the primary focus of the county's Road & Bridge Department's efforts in response to snow, ice or other winter storm or another emergency event.

As with any driving situation, roadway users must exercise reasonable caution and drive with care. Driving at the posted speed limit may not be possible at all times. When encountering a county plow/sander please give them a little extra room. When following a plow truck

please allow a 500' buffer space between you and the plow. Anti-skid applications will be concentrated on intersections, hills, curves and other problem areas to assist with traction; however, these efforts do not relieve the motorist from the responsibility to use good judgment in using county roadways. Tire chains may be advisable in certain situations.

RAVALLI COUNTY CAN NOT AND DOES NOT ASSURE A COMPLETELY BARE PAVEMENT.

Ravalli County does not have sufficient operational resources to inspect all of the county's roadways for weather-related issues during, after or in anticipation of an impending winter weather event and may not have resources to correct all potentially hazardous conditions. Ravalli County will respond to reports of specific potential hazards and conditions, giving consideration to available public resources and the apparent degree of the potential hazard in relation to others known or anticipated. The decision as to the allocation of resources will be within the discretion of the Ravalli County Road Supervisor, through coordination with and at the direction of the Board of County Commissioners.

COORDINATION WITH SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Providing for the safe transportation of students to and from the county's schools is an objective shared by all, as is the responsibility. No single entity is alone responsible for ensuring that safety - it requires a partnership of the school districts, the county, the parents of students and other roadway users. With the limited physical resources of the county, the multiple and extensive bus routes established by the school districts and the diverse elements of the county's roadway system, safe and effective wintertime school transportation requires a coordinated effort and a mutual commitment by all of the partners.

- ❖ The physical characteristics of certain roadway segments, including abrupt or extended vertical alignment, may preclude routine operation of school bus traffic. The Road & Bridge Department and the school districts should work together to identify these locations and develop reasonable alternatives, which may include revising the bus routes or requiring the routine use of traction devices (tire chains) on the bus.
- ❖ To facilitate timely and efficient dispatching of response vehicles, the Road & Bridge Department, during times of inclement or threatening weather, will provide for late night / early morning roadway inspection.

- ❖ The Road & Bridge Department will provide for a notification system through which the school districts may obtain roadway condition and response activity information, and relay individual question or concern.
- ❖ The school districts and parents should identify secure locations and procedures for collection and delivery of students and should work with the Road & Bridge Department to establish a method of identification of those locations to alert response vehicle operators. These locations will be included in placement of anti-skid aggregates, as provided for in this policy. Consolidation of these locations should be considered.
- ❖ The timing and extent of certain weather events may require the delay or cancellation of typical school bus schedules. The school districts should coordinate with the Road & Bridge Department to ensure that roadway conditions will accommodate established schedules. Parents should ensure that bus schedules remain as advertised and provide for alternatives in the event that bus schedules are delayed or cancelled.

OPERATING PROCEDURES

I) DISPATCHING OF EQUIPMENT

The County will normally not dispatch snow removal equipment until after a snowfall event has ended or until approximately four (4) inches of snow has accumulated. Snow removal equipment is usually kept off of priority routes during peak traffic hours to avoid congestion and visibility problems. During unusual situations where earlier deployment, or deployment on established priority routes, appears to be a more prudent use of county resources to meet certain, special, public needs, the Ravalli County Road Supervisor* has the discretion to dispatch equipment contrary to standard policy or procedure.

Graded sand (anti-skid) materials are used to provide stopping and starting traction at intersections, hills, curves and other areas of concern. Anti-skid application equipment will be dispatched when roadway surface conditions may make travel for the **responsible roadway user** unusually problematic.

- If a snow and ice event develops during regular working hours (Monday - Friday, 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.), equipment may be dispatched at that time. If an event develops during the nighttime or early morning hours, equipment will usually be dispatched between 3:00 a.m. and 5:00 a.m.

- Response to weekend and holiday emergency events will be handled in a similar fashion. During extended emergency weather events, the Road & Bridge Department may elect to operate on a twenty-four-hour schedule.
- The dispatch of response vehicles and personnel will be the responsibility of the County Road Supervisor* working within the parameters of this plan and other policies. The County Road Supervisor* has the discretion to consider special circumstances, prudent use of public resources and unusual public needs in making exceptions to these plans and policies.
- Weather forecasts provided by the National Weather Service and other responsible reporting agencies will be considered when determining an appropriate response to snow and ice and other winter weather events.

2) OPERATING SEQUENCE

In emergency situations, roadways assigned “priority” status will be scheduled for response first. In certain extraordinary situations these efforts may need to be continuous. After priority routes have been cleared, remaining collector routes will be serviced. Residential and minor local access roadways will be serviced only after major and minor collector routes have been cleared.

3) ANTI-SKID APPLICATION

A clean finely graded aggregate, or “anti-skid” material, may be mechanically spread at intersections, curves, on hills and other problematic areas, at the discretion of the equipment operator. This material is applied to assist the tractive effort of a vehicle and is not necessarily intended to melt ice or snow.

Anti-skid materials are normally recycled into the (rural) roadway shoulder, or swept and collected from roadways within **Riparian Management Areas**.

Anti-skid materials will be applied to the degree consistent with providing a reasonable level of public safety, appropriately limited in areas where there is a potential of siltation in fish spawning streams, shallow lakes or ponds, or where sensitive or rare plants have been identified near a county roadway.

4) PERSONAL PROPERTIES

A) Mail boxes, trash receptacles or other personal property damaged during snow removal activity will be evaluated on a case by case basis. Only those mail receptacles that were in acceptable condition & were **properly located and installed** in accordance with United States Postal Service standards and which were damaged by actual physical contact with county equipment will be considered for repair at the county's expense. Trash receptacles left in County Right of Way and not physically contacted by equipment will not be considered for repair or reimbursement. Ravalli County operators will take extra caution and care on trash pick-up days. The public shall remove those trash receptacles from the Right of Way for the remainder of the week.

B) Only rock or sand coming directly from a county vehicle or equipment and striking a vehicle will qualify for any sort of restitution. Rocks coming from the road surface will be considered a road hazard and there will not be any restitution. Anyone with vehicle damage is required to contact the road department immediately, produce vehicle to the Road Department for inspection, fill out a Ravalli County damage report & deliver at least two estimates for repairs to the Road Department. The claims meeting the criteria above will be produced to the commissioner's office for their review and consideration.

C) Vehicles without a valid registration parked in the County Right of Way and interfering with snow removal operations may be towed at owners expense.

D) Ravalli County residents are reminded that **IT IS AGAINST THE LAW** to deposit snow upon or across public roadways. Piles of snow left on or near the roadway can freeze into a solid mass, creating a hazardous situation for vehicles and snowplows. Collisions and damages caused by snow placed in the roadway may result in a substantial liability to the property owner(s).

E) Ravalli County operators may assist stranded motorists by contacting law enforcement or other emergency personnel. County employees will not attempt to remove or extract vehicles from ditches, snow banks or any other impediment. Residents are reminded to remove parked vehicles and other property from public roadways and rights-of-way to assist in snow removal.

F) Motorists are encouraged to ensure that their vehicles are appropriately maintained and equipped for winter-weather driving situations. Tire chains and/or other traction-aid devices may be advisable in particular situations.

5) COORDINATION OF EFFORTS

Ravalli County will coordinate Winter Roadway Operations with the Montana Department of Transportation, the Bitter Root National Forest and local public works agencies, providing mutual support and response whenever possible.

INFORMATION

Questions or concerns regarding Ravalli County Winter Roadway Operations may be directed to the Ravalli County Road & Bridge Department in Hamilton at (406) 363 - 2733. Local radio stations and other media should be monitored for information on roadway conditions and roadway emergency declarations.

* The Ravalli County Road Supervisor or his/her designee.