



# FREQUENTLY ASKED SNOW REMOVAL QUESTIONS

**Q: How is snow removal divided throughout the County?**

A: Due to the geographic nature of the County, snow removal is divided between the Western Slope and the Tahoe Basin. The Tahoe Basin unit covers everything from Tahoma to Meyers and West to Strawberry. The West Slope is broken into North, South, East, and West County. However, because West County doesn't ordinarily require snow removal, the West County Crew typically covers snow removal for the crew that has been assigned the night shift for the month. Snow removal operations engage all of our road maintenance crews with the assistance of the brushing crew, Bridge Maintenance, and the Sign shop covering the West County, flooding, and tree calls during storm events.

**Q: What roads is the County responsible for plowing?**

A: All county-maintained roads are Transportation's responsibility. Private roads needing snow removal must rely on the residents or hire private services. Transportation cannot plow private roads. If you're unsure if your road is county-maintained, call 530-642-4909 or look online at <https://edcapps.edcgov.us/dot/countyroads.asp>.

**Q: When do snow removal operations begin?**

A: Snow removal operations commence when the snow accumulation reaches 3 inches. Our primary focus is promptly addressing main arterial roads to ensure safe passage for travelers and emergency services. Once the main roads are effectively cleared, our plow operators proceed to collectors and residential surface streets in established snow removal patterns. The County uses patterns developed over many decades to maximize speed, safety, and efficiency of snow removal operations.

In certain weather events, the snow accumulation on the main roads may surpass the 3-inch threshold before plows can access the surface streets. In such instances, the main roads are plowed once again before proceeding with the established pattern and addressing the surface streets.

Once all streets are cleared in the Tahoe Basin, rotary plows will begin widening streets. Rotary operations are much slower than traditional plowing and proceed in the same order as snow plowing. Please be patient and do your part to make sure the shoulder is free of obstructions and obstacles that can further delay snow removal.

*Do not allow children or pets to play or dig in the snow berm. Plow and blower operators are unable to see in or over berms.*

**Q: How long will it take to get to a particular area?**

A: Transportation does not provide estimates of plow times. Every attempt is made to ensure each road is cleared, at a minimum, at least once in 24-48 hours. Estimating the progress of snow removal is complex due to numerous factors determining the duration required for road clearance, such as: downed trees and utility lines, vehicles parked in the right-of-way, equipment failures, and staffing levels. Another pivotal factor is the type of snowstorm, where cold storms with light accumulation are notably quicker to address compared to the heavier, wetter "Sierra Cement" bearing storms. If an obstruction is encountered, the plow drivers must prioritize safety and procedurally bypass obstructions temporarily, returning to this point in the pattern once the other roads in the area are cleared of snow. Once plowing is complete, DOT operators will begin widening roadways.

**Q: Can I request that a road be cleared due to it being impassable for emergency vehicles?**

A: In case of an emergency, dial 911 immediately. Emergency services possess the necessary capabilities to operate in snowy conditions and can also seek assistance from plow operators. However, it is crucial to note that plow dispatch for emergencies can only be initiated through emergency services.

**Q: What do I need to do if there is damage to my property from the plow?**

A: You can call and request a copy of the [claim form](#) be emailed or delivered to your address. Once we receive a call, a supervisor will come out and investigate the incident. From there, you will return the form to the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors at: [edc.cob@edcgov.us](mailto:edc.cob@edcgov.us), or the address listed on the form.

**Q: Is it permissible to shovel driveway snow out onto the roadway for the plows to clear during their next pass?**

A: Unfortunately, this practice is not allowed according to County Ordinance 10.12.180-184. It is essential to adhere to this regulation as it aims to maintain road safety and protect homeowners from potential liabilities that may arise due to such actions.

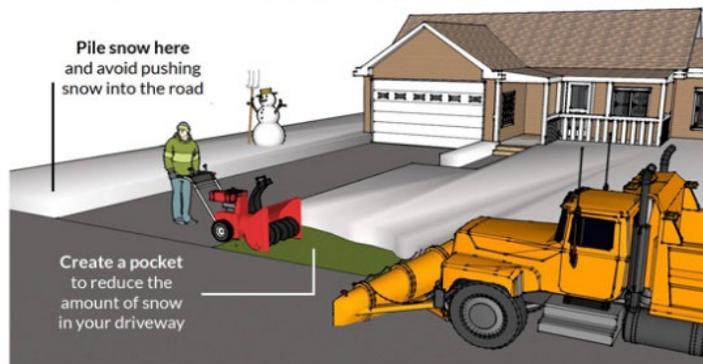
**Q: Can the county please remove the berm from my driveway?**

A: We are unable to remove berms in private driveways. Berms are a standard and unfortunate part of our snow removal operations. As residents, clearing your own driveways is part of your responsibility, and we encourage you to take proactive measures to minimize the impact of snow discharge from the plow blade.

One useful technique is to create negative space on the leading side of your driveway, allowing the snow to discharge from the blade before it reaches your property, which helps mitigate the size of the berm. Additionally, if possible, waiting until after the road is clear to shovel driveways provides more resistance to the discharge and further minimizes the berm. When waiting is not an option, creating negative space is the best option.

**How Can I Keep Snow Out of my Driveway?**

*Before your street has been plowed, we recommend the following:*



Using this method to clear snow will reduce the amount of snow that accumulates at the end of your driveway!

**Q: Can't the county just change the angle of the blade or lift the plow when they are approaching my driveway?**

A: To efficiently remove snow, plows are designed to push the snow from the center of the road towards the right side. They cannot angle the snow into oncoming traffic. This method not only ensures effective snow clearance but also allows residents to deal with only half of the snow, making it more manageable for them.

**Q: Do I need snow poles for my driveway or landscaping?**

A: You should make sure that you have snow poles in place marking the beginning and end of your driveway to inform the plow operator that it is there. Additionally, objects that may present a hazard to the plow and will be hidden underneath heavy snow should be marked.

**Q: Did the plow driver not deploy the gates when they passed my driveway? There is still a berm! (Tahoe area only)**

A: If you believe the driver failed to deploy the gate, please feel free to call us at (530) 642-4909. One way you can tell if the gate was used is the change in height of the snow between the shoulder and the driveway. Sometimes, a berm is left even when using the gate, as once the snow depth exceeds approximately a foot, we experience what we call boil over. Meaning the gate can only hold back a certain amount of snow before it falls over the top, causing the gate to lose much of its efficiency. This happens especially in very heavy snowstorms.

**Q: What should I do about parking my vehicles during the winter?**

A: It is a violation of County Ordinance 10.12.180-184 to park anywhere in the right-of-way between October 15<sup>th</sup> and April 15<sup>th</sup>. The right-of-way extends beyond the pavement onto the shoulder to allow ample place for snow storage. Vehicles parked illegally are subject to tow-away at the owner's expense. Residents should park their vehicles completely within their own driveways. Should a vehicle be in the right-of-way and hindering snow removal operations, the road will be bypassed, and the vehicle will be ticketed and towed, allowing plowing services to resume.

**Q: How do you know my road has been plowed?**

A: Snowplows operate in patterns, and supervisors check the areas a driver has already worked to assure that no roads were missed. Additionally, plows are equipped with GPS locators that store travel data, allowing us to see when the road was last plowed and if it was missed.

**Q: What happens when a plow or blower breaks down?**

A: Mechanics work tirelessly during snow removal to keep the equipment operational and minimize downtime during breakdowns. The County keeps mechanics staffed at the Placerville yard, South Lake Tahoe, and Tahoma yards during snow removal.

Although every effort is made to prevent breakdowns, they still occur, especially during large snowstorms. The bigger storms put a significant strain on the equipment. In the event of equipment failure, a replacement piece of equipment is brought in as soon as it becomes available. This operational approach means that when a piece of equipment goes down, a driver working in a nearby zone will complete their current zone before transitioning to pick up where the equipment left off, ensuring continuity of the snow removal pattern.

**Q: Can County crews move a stuck vehicle from the roadway?**

A: Plow operators are unable to aid vehicles stuck in the snow. Meanwhile, plow drivers will be redirected to bypass the street the vehicle is obstructing and will return to clear it later.

We recommend always carrying tire chains (state law) during the winter months, even in 4WD vehicles with snow tires. Additionally, having tools such as a shovel will further assist in getting vehicles free from snow.

**We value your cooperation in making snow removal as efficient and hassle-free as possible. By working together, we can ensure a smoother snow clearance process that benefits the entire community.**

