

## **SLT Snow Removal FAQs**

\*The County is steadfast in its commitment to providing accessible and safe roads for residents, businesses, and emergency services during challenging weather conditions.

### **Q: Will there be any night-time snow removal?**

A: The Department of Transportation (DOT) will always have a night shift snow removal crew. At a minimum, we will always have two crew members but are determined to keep at least five or more with the help of Placerville staffing resources assisting the basin whenever feasible. As of December 17, 2024, we have just three vacancies on the night crew. Additionally, there are applicants in various stages of the hiring process, and we're always looking for more! People can apply by going to [www.governmentjobs.com/careers/edcgov](http://www.governmentjobs.com/careers/edcgov).

### **Q: If the County roads don't get plowed, can the County request that Highway 50 be closed?**

A: Highway 50 is under the jurisdiction of Caltrans and the County does not have input as to when it is closed.

### **Q: What will happen if there is an emergency, and an ambulance is unable to get through a road that isn't plowed?**

A: DOT staff works closely with emergency personnel and will plow ahead of emergency equipment if the road is not passable. DOT staff makes every attempt to be proactive and listen to the necessary radio channels so that we can respond rapidly. Similarly, first responders can request assistance.

### **Q: If you only have enough employees to cover one shift, why can't you make the shift 2 am–2 pm?**

A: There are always two shifts operating during winter storms. However, plowing during the day is far more efficient due to visibility and fewer vehicle obstructions on residential streets; therefore, fully staffing the day shift is essential to ensuring that the most road miles are plowed, and 6 am – 6 pm has proven to be the most productive.

### **Q: Can you split your current staff so that you have half of them working the day shift and half working the night shift?**

A: There will be two shifts operating during winter storms: a day shift and a night shift. Our policy is to begin plowing when there is an accumulation of approximately three inches of snow on the roadway. Staff prioritizes keeping major and arterial roads clear and accessible, including bus routes; next, residential roads are cleared, and staff always assists emergency responder calls.

### **Q: What can staff accomplish in a 12-hour shift in a light storm vs. a heavy storm?**

A: This is a complicated question due to a myriad of "ifs" not only related to the storm severity but also due to staffing levels and available equipment. However, the last two snow events in December in which the basin received over 3 inches of snow, all County roads were plowed within a 24 hour period with the help of Placerville staff.

### **Q: Can snow removal patterns reverse every other day?**

A: Plow patterns are built on pushing the snow to the right by making right-hand turns. If we were to reverse the pattern, there would be more instances when the snow would be pushed to the left, accumulating more snow in front of private property and on the road and reducing plow times. Patterns have been designed and fine-tuned over decades to make snow removal intuitive to our operators and maximize efficiency; any changes to those routes will cause delays. Plow patterns currently reflect the most efficient route possible.

**Q: Can the County hire local snowplow businesses who are willing to work and plow roads for the County?**

A: Government Code requires that agencies go through the bidding process when contracting out services and prevailing wage to be paid. In certain situations, the Union would be required to approve the contract as well. The prevailing wage for snow removal operations costs up to \$98 (3 times higher than our County staff) an hour for the first 40 hours, and overtime is double. Additionally, if contractors were used, they would not be familiar with the snow patterns, hence reducing plow times and increasing snow accumulation.

**Q: What can we expect for Emergency Services and Schools?**

A: Should emergency services be needed, staff will respond to assist.

**Q: Who do we call when we get stuck because the road isn't plowed?**

A: If your vehicle gets stuck, you should contact a tow company to remove your vehicle from the road to ensure DOT staff is able to plow the roadway. If vehicles remain in the road, whether it is due to snow accumulations or inadequate tire traction, DOT plow drivers will not be able to safely pass the vehicle, which will require them to bypass the road and return later to plow when the obstruction has been removed.

**Q: When equipment breaks down, can it go back to the same zone, not move on to the next?**

A: The DOT standard is to start the pattern where it was left off. There are likely instances where it was inadvertently started over again. During the annual snow meeting, this topic was addressed to ensure snow patterns will begin where it was last plowed.

**Q: Can you use the Fire Department to operate equipment?**

A: Due to liability, only County employees are allowed to operate DOT equipment.

**Q: Where is the funding? Where did you put it?**

A: The public can access the full County budget, including DOT's budget, on the County website here: [www.eldoradocounty.ca.gov/County-Government/County-Departments/Chief-Administrative-Office/Budget-Information/Fiscal-Year-2024-2025-Recommended-Budget](http://www.eldoradocounty.ca.gov/County-Government/County-Departments/Chief-Administrative-Office/Budget-Information/Fiscal-Year-2024-2025-Recommended-Budget). DOT's budget is separated out on that same page under "Land Use & Development Departments." The Road Fund information starts on page 6 of the pdf.

**Q: An article went out in March 2024 saying that staffing levels were low. Why did it take until November for something to be said/done?**

A: DOT staff has been working diligently with HR to streamline and fill the necessary positions. Recruitment began as early as April, months ahead of the traditional recruitment timeline, and the recruitment has been kept open well into the winter season to mitigate the natural turnover that occurs in these positions.

**Q: To apply for open positions, is experience needed? Do you train? Wage – seasonal or year-round?**

A: All job descriptions have a minimum requirement. To apply for a Snow Removal Worker position, an applicant must possess a Class A or Class B license. DOT staff trains extra help employees once they start. However, we do not train extra help to obtain their Class A or B license. However, DOT will train permanent workers to obtain their Class A or B licenses. Highway Maintenance Worker positions are permanent, year-round, while Snow Removal Worker positions are extra help, usually running from the first week in November to March or April of the following year.

**Q: Does the County pay for staff to acquire their Class A license?**

A: El Dorado County does train and pay for permanent staff to acquire their Class A license; however, due to Snow Removal Worker Job Specifications and extra help time restrictions, DOT does not pay and train extra help to obtain their Class A or B license.