

Highway winter service



Gritting and snow clearance

Our aim is to keep you as safe as possible on the highway, whether you are driving or walking. During the winter period (October to March) we have 12 gritting vehicles on stand-by that can be fitted with snow ploughs, and our staff are available 24 hours a day. During prolonged periods of severe weather, we can call on additional resources to cope with the demand.

We are committed to delivering the highest level of service, but with approximately 650 miles of roads and almost double this amount of footways across the borough it is not possible for the council to grit this length of highway in one operation. Therefore we have to prioritise gritting and snow clearing into routes, according to their usage.

Treatment types and priorities

Precautionary salting

This means applying salt to a road to prevent ice forming and snow settling in the first instance. To provide an effective salting operation aimed at ensuring the safe movement of vehicles, we prioritise precautionary salting according to the amount of vehicles using a particular road. These are:

Priority 1: High speed, strategic and main traffic routes (typically A, B and C class roads). Leigh Guided Busway (LEGB)

Priority 2: Local bus routes, access roads to hospitals, ambulance and fire stations, industrial estate roads and schools

These priorities account for approximately 34% of the total road length across the full borough - no other roads receive precautionary salting.

Once we have made the decision to start precautionary salting, operations will start within the hour. Priority 1 roads will be completed within three hours and Priority 2 roads within two hours thereafter.

Snow clearance

When continuous snow is forecast, we will increase the salting spread rate to help melt the initial snowfall. For snow already on the road at depths over 40mm, we will carry out combined ploughing and salting.

The motorways are not the responsibility of the council, but you can check your travel plans for the M6, M61 and M58 by visiting the Highways England website at www.highways.gov.uk/traffic

Severe Weather Deployment Plan

If snow above 40mm deep (or ice following rainfall) is forecast to remain beyond a 24 hour period, we will implement our Severe Weather Deployment Plan. This is a road and footway ice and snow clearing operation to ensure disruption to important services is kept to a minimum. Priority areas are:

Priority 1: Wigan and Leigh town centres.

Priority 2: Main district town centres (Ashton, Atherton, Golborne, Hindley, Pemberton, Standish and Tyldesley). These areas will be treated when all Priority 1 footways have been cleared.

Priority 3: Local community shopping areas, including:

- Rail station access
- Bus station access
- Bus stops (major footways)
- Pedestrian crossing points (major footways)
- Main car parks access
- Public building access
- Day centre access
- Clinics and GP surgery access
- Schools and Sure Start children's centres
- Bus stops on Quality Bus Corridors
- Police, ambulance and fire stations

These areas will be treated when all Priority 1+2 footways have been cleared.

Please note: No other footways will be treated.

We review the priority areas every year following each Winter season.

For details of the roads and footways included in our designated gritting routes and Severe Weather Deployment Plan, see our contact details on the back of this leaflet.

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There are currently 474 salt bins located across the borough with a combined storage capacity of over 120 tonnes of salt. We check each bin before the Winter season and refill if necessary.

We provide salt bins at locations where drivers face difficult conditions that may prove hazardous or prevent them from accessing designated salted routes. Typically these locations are at sharp bends, steep hills, junctions, etc. We have already provided salt bins at known locations, but you can still request new bins for use on roads that do not receive precautionary gritting. Please note, however, that we may not be able to meet all requests for salt bins, and before any new locations are agreed we must make sure there is a genuine need. We use the following criteria to make this decision:

- Bins will only be provided on sites with difficult conditions, for example, steep hills, sharp bends, junctions, etc.
- There must be sufficient space on the footpath or verge in order that the bin does not cause obstruction to pedestrians or traffic sight lines and the bin can be replenished safely.
- No bins will be provided to serve a road if that road is included in the precautionary salting route.
- No bins will be provided to serve a footway if that footway is included in the Severe Weather Deployment Plan.
- No bins will be provided on unadopted roads.
- No bins will be provided for private areas or car parks for internal use by either council, public or private property such as schools, parks, hospitals, old people's homes, etc. unless a service level agreement is in place.
- A community green coloured bin may be provided at locations that do not fit the council's criteria for salt bin location. These bins will be sited and replenished at the community's cost.
- Should a site prove problematic because of regular misuse of salt for the treatment of private driveways, or vandalism of a bin, the council reserves the right to remove the bin.

**We currently salt 34%
of the borough's roads.**

What you can do

Please make your own arrangements for salting your premises - we do not provide supplies of salt to members of the public or local businesses.

Many residents in Winter spread rock salt onto their walkways and driveways to melt ice and thin layers of snow. We would advise you to keep up-to-date with weather forecasts throughout the coldest months and to spread rock salt in the evening if low temperatures are forecast, and again in the morning. This is especially beneficial for properties at the top or bottom of a steep path or drive and even more so if steps are involved.

Salt can quickly become in short supply, especially during severe weather conditions, and we would advise you to be prepared and have the necessary supplies and equipment in place for these conditions. Bagged crushed rock salt for thawing ice and snow is ideal for gritting paths and driveways. For a relatively small cost, a bag of rock salt can offer some insurance against Winter accidents. If you have a business or a large property, you may even wish to consider purchasing a grit bin to store extra amounts of salt for your own use.

You can obtain supplies of salt, salt storage facilities, etc. from your local DIY store or general hardware store or by accessing the internet.

Take care if you want to move the snow. When you are shovelling snow, make sure it doesn't block other access points or drains. Make sure you make a path down the middle of the area to be cleared first, so you have a clear surface to walk on. Then shovel the snow from the centre of the path to the sides.

Snow and ice should be completely removed using a suitable snow scraper or shovel. Snow and ice should not be brushed or dissolved using hot water, as this will make surfaces more hazardous. Once the path has been cleared, rock salt should be used to assist in providing extra grip. There is no advantage in gritting/salting deep snow; this should be cleared from the path first.

If you are able to get volunteers to help clear snow and ice but are worried about being held responsible for an accident, the Health and Safety Executive have issued the following statement to ease your concerns:

“I would like to make it clear that under health and safety legislation nobody who volunteers to support their community by clearing pavements during icy conditions should feel they are in danger of being sued. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) encourages a common sense approach to health and safety. We think it is ridiculous that people should feel prevented from helping others, through a fear of being held responsible for an accident.”

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Pedestrians

Icy pavements and roads can be very slippery:

- Take extra care if you go out and wear boots or shoes with good grip on the soles.
- Always check the weather forecast, don't get caught out by the unexpected.
- Wear appropriate clothing.
- Be both warm and visible.
- Carry a torch if required.
- Be aware of icy pavements. If you have to walk on a road, face oncoming vehicles so that you can react to the traffic.
- Watch out for objects buried in the snow which might trip you up or cause injury.
- Let someone know where you are going and when you will be back.
- If you carry a mobile phone, check that the battery is charged.

Look out for others

Check up on friends, relatives and neighbours who may be more vulnerable to cold weather. Cold weather is especially dangerous for older people or people with serious illnesses, so check up on them if you can.

Keep up to date

Local radio is an excellent source of regular road and weather updates:

Wish FM: 102.4FM

BBC Radio Manchester: 95.1FM

Safer driving in Wigan Borough

Wigan Council takes public safety on the roads in Winter very seriously. We ask that all road users take particular care during poor driving conditions and take precautions to ensure that they and their vehicle are safe for Winter driving.

Safe Winter driving

Always ask yourself whether or not your journey is essential. If driving conditions are bad, it may be worth considering travelling by rail or bus. If you do need to use your vehicle, please wait until the roads have been gritted.

Before making your journey

1. Check the local radio or internet for travel information, including weather forecasts.
2. Make sure someone knows your planned route and estimated time of arrival.
3. Give yourself time to make sure your vehicle is safe - check your tyre pressure and tread. Don't forget your spare tyre. Ensure your vehicle's lights are clean and in working order and that you have enough fuel and windscreen wash before starting your journey.
4. Never set off until all the windows and mirrors have been cleared and defrosted.
5. Prepare yourself with a torch, mobile phone, wellingtons, warm clothing and a shovel. For longer journeys, ensure you have a hot flask, drinks and some snacks.
6. Accelerate and brake more gently when in wet and icy conditions. Break before reaching a bend, not on it.
7. Use dipped headlights in mist, heavy rain, fog or falling snow.
8. Use rear fog lights in fog, mist or falling snow but not in rain. Remember to switch them off as soon as conditions allow.
9. Slow down and be aware of vulnerable road users such as cyclists, motor cyclists and pedestrians.

Local services

Local services may be affected by the weather. For an update on how the weather may be affecting refuse collection, roads, parking and schools, see our contact details on the back of this leaflet.

Travelling by rail or air

If you are travelling by rail or air, check directly with your rail or airline company to find out if their services have been affected by local weather or other problems, and allow extra travel time to get to the station or airport. You can usually get this information from the internet.

Places Directorate, Highways Department

Phone: 01942 404364

(8am to 6pm Monday to Friday, 8am to 12.30pm Saturday)

Email: eshelpline@wigan.gov.uk