



## **An Advisory to Citizens of Washington County from the Road & Bridge Department Regarding Winter Operations**

During the winter season, the Road and Bridge Department would like to take this opportunity to inform the citizens of Washington County about what to expect for snow plowing and sanding operations.

Washington County has a diverse labor force and it is impossible to meet the needs of each of our citizens. Therefore, the Road and Bridge Department asks that anyone operating a motor vehicle during this season take the time to equip their vehicle with necessary winter equipment. The following is an inventory of necessary items that should be in each vehicle:

- Matches and Candles
- Flashlight and Extra Batteries
- First Aid Kit
- Tire Chains
- Small sack of Sand or Cat Litter
- Shovel and Small Tool Kit
- Tow Chain or Strap
- Jumper Cables
- Warning Triangles

All motorists must realize there may be periods during storm events when roads will not be freshly plowed and/or sanded.

The Road and Bridge Department requests that for your safety you are prepared for these conditions and understand the proper use of the devices outlined in the suggested inventory list. Additionally, all motorists should tell someone when and where they will be traveling to prevent being stranded for long periods of time.

Now for our part. The Road and Bridge Department Operators must possess a Commercial Drivers License. The Washington County Government is required to follow the Federal Motor Carriers Safety Regulations Part 385 (Hours of Operation). It is in violation of Part 395 to require our operators to drive their respective equipment for more than 11 hours following a 10-hour “off-duty” period.

Since this department only has as many operators as there is available equipment, we can only offer service for 11 consecutive hours, followed by a 10-hour “off-duty” period each day. It is the policy of this department to clear the school bus routes first and then the collector or “Primary” classified roads for peak traffic travel. This would include an effort placed on Postal Service routes as well. After these roads are cleared, the local roads or “Secondary” roads are then plowed.

During a snow event, our operators are notified at 4:00 a.m. to begin operations by 5:00 a.m. All plow routes are designed to take approximately 8 hours to complete (this generally means each road is plowed once during this time). During continuous snow storms, the operators will work the maximum allowed hours but may have to concentrate on Primary classified roads, which is the reason some Secondary roads may receive little if any attention. At no time can we offer service between 8:00 p.m. and 4:00 a.m.

A rule of thumb is the “lower the traffic volume on a road, the more likely the road is to receive little or no attention during large snow-fall events.” Snowfall of 4” or less, no action required unless considerable wind causes drifting. With our below average precipitation, moisture on our gravel roads actually helps our maintenance operations.

Snowfall of 4” or more requires our operators to clear snow off the road as soon as possible in one direction. Once a single lane has been cleared on all Primary designated roads, our next efforts will be to clear the remainder of the width of the road. A normal depth of 2-3” of snow left on our gravel roads is acceptable.

All of the hard surfaced roads in Washington County will be completely cleared with snowfalls of 4” or more. Anything less than that, usually nature takes care for us.

Private driveways and roads are not the County’s responsibility. Any resident asking for their private property to be graded or plowed out from snowfall, must request in writing to be considered. The Commissioners may allow an exception to this policy. A release from liability form must be signed **prior** to any road work if the exception is allowed.

Our hope is that by offering this information, motorists will prepare themselves with the suggested inventory listed above and try to plan their trips in conjunction with our schedule. If you have any questions, please call the Road and Bridge Office at 970-345-2701 to have your questions answered or directed.