



## Winter maintenance service summary 2010-11

Information about how Dorset County Council works to keep our roads safe and clear during winter

### Why we salt the roads

Every winter, Dorset County Council's highways service is on 24-hour standby to treat our roads with salt so traffic can keep moving as safely as possible across the county.

This summary is intended as an overview of our winter roads service: which roads we will salt and when, the resources available and how people can stay informed.

The last two winters were particularly harsh, leading to nationwide salt shortages. In Dorset, we have improved our winter preparations, including:

- redesigning our salting network to treat the 25% of our roads used by 80% of traffic
- increasing our salt stocks by 20% to cope with a prolonged cold snap
- based salting decisions on local forecasts, so salt goes where it's needed

### When we salt the roads

Our decisions to salt roads are based on detailed forecasts using data from five local weather stations. We will salt roads when conditions are damp and road temperatures are near freezing.

In previous years, we salted roads across the whole county regardless of local variations. This year, we will salt roads in all or some areas based on local road temperatures, meaning salt goes where it's needed and isn't wasted.

During the winter, we focus on preventative 'pre-salting' to stop ice forming on roads. Roads are usually treated in the early evening. Salt works by lowering the temperature at which water freezes and is helped by traffic moving over it.

### Our salting network

With more than 2,500 miles of roads, it would be impossible to treat every mile. This year, we have updated the network of roads we salt based on use. It is now a single network made of the 25% of our roads used by 80% of traffic, including:

- all primary (A, B and well-used C) roads





- links to hospitals, industrial estates, transport interchanges and emergency service stations
- routes to urban schools with more than 500 pupils and rural schools with more than 350 pupils
- primary bus routes, and
- main routes through parishes with populations more than 750 people

The network includes roads in Christchurch and Weymouth and Portland, previously treated by the borough councils. Roads in Bournemouth and Poole are salted by the unitary councils. The A31, A35 (west of Bere Regis) and A303 trunk roads are treated by the Highways Agency.

The network is under constant review throughout the winter.

### **Dealing with snow**

Our forecasts normally predict snow well in advance, allowing us to fit ploughs and be ready to work around the clock until snow is cleared.

We aim to pre-salt the roads before it snows. This is normally enough to melt light snow and keep traffic moving. If snow gets heavier we will start ploughing and treat the roads with a 50/50 mix of salt and grit to provide more grip. Some roads may become impassable until we can plough and treat them.

In very heavy snow, we will not be able to keep the entire salting network open and will focus on clearing primary north-south and east-west routes. As soon as these are clear, we will start clearing the rest of the network.

There are around 150 farmers to whom we have loaned snow-ploughs and will be called out to plough sections of minor rural roads.

### **Community self-help**

Salt bins can be bought by borough, town and parish councils to treat roads and footpaths off the salting network. This salt is not for private paths and driveways.

Requests for salt bins should be made to your borough, town or parish council. To find their details, go to [www.dorsetforyou.com](http://www.dorsetforyou.com) and type your postcode into the 'find your nearest' search.





We will then authorise where the bins can go and restock them if resources allow. In severe conditions, we may not be able to re-fill salt bins. Requests for more salt should be made to us on (01305) 221020.

## **The Snow Code**

The Government's guide to clearing snow from footpaths recommends:

- Start early - it's much easier to clear fresh, loose snow compared to compacted ice that has been compressed by people walking on it
- Don't use hot water - this will melt the snow, but may replace it with black ice, increasing the risk of injury
- Be a good Neighbour - some people may be unable to clear snow and ice on paths from their property
- If shoveling snow, think where you are going to put it so that it doesn't block people's paths or drainage channels
- Make a pathway down the middle of the area to be cleared first, so you have a clear surface to walk on
- Spreading some salt on the area you have cleared will help stop ice forming - table salt or dishwasher salt will work, but avoid spreading on plants or grass as they may be damaged by it
- Pay particular care and attention to steps and steep gradients
- Use the sun to your advantage - removing the top layer of snow will allow the sun to melt any ice beneath; however you will need to cover any ice with salt to stop it refreezing overnight
- If there's no salt available, sand or ash are good alternatives

For more information [http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/NI1/Newsroom/DG\\_191868](http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/NI1/Newsroom/DG_191868)

## **Winter driving advice**

If travelling, remember these tips from the Dorset Road Safe partnership

- Make sure your battery is charged, windows, mirrors and lights are frost-free, tyres are in good condition and properly inflated and lights and wipers are working
- Listen to the radio for weather updates, give yourself extra time and tell someone your planned route and expected arrival time
- Carry a mobile phone, warm clothes, a torch and a spade





- Never assume a road has been salted. Even salted roads can have slippery patches and rain showers can wash salt off of the roads
- Reduce your speed, manoeuvre gently and avoid harsh braking and acceleration
- If you start to skid, ease off the accelerator but never brake suddenly
- Give snow ploughs and gritters plenty of room
- In severe conditions, don't travel unless absolutely necessary

### Key facts

- We have 26 salt-spreading vehicles or 'gritters' operating from five depots
- On each salting run we treat around 675 miles of road, spreading about 150 tonnes of salt
- It takes around two and a half hours to salt the whole network
- There are 30 drivers and two operational duty managers on stand-by 24/7 through the winter to salt roads and respond to emergencies
- This winter we have increased our salt stocks at the start of winter from 8,000 to 12,000 tonnes

### Keeping you informed

To get updates on road salting, answers to frequently asked questions and information about how the weather is affecting council services, go to [www.dorsetforyou.com/winter](http://www.dorsetforyou.com/winter)

Anyone can get frequent updates about road salting, weather conditions and changes to services on our Twitter feed at [www.twitter.com/dorsetforyou](http://www.twitter.com/dorsetforyou)

If you have any questions or want to report a problem on our roads, you can call us on (01305) 221020 or email [winterservice@dorsetcc.gov.uk](mailto:winterservice@dorsetcc.gov.uk)

All leaflets can be made available in audio tape, large print and Braille or alternative languages on request.

