

32. Snow clearing.

- **Why we do what we do. (February, 2022, Informer)**



SNOW CLEARING: WHY WE DO WHAT WE DO

We're very proud of our snow clearing in MoWest, but every year we get questions about the process. Let me take you behind the scenes to explain why we do what we do.

When do snow operations start?

We initiate plowing and salting once 2 cm of snow has fallen, day or night. In fact, we have two employees on the night shift for the peak winter months to ensure the snow operations can begin immediately. The actual snow removal generally begins once 20 cm has accumulated.

There are exceptions to this policy, however, under certain weather conditions. For instance, a mix of winter rain and freezing temperatures can block the catch basins causing flooding or turn the snow drifts into blocks of ice. So we may need to remove the snow before 20 cm has fallen.

Why do we hire contractors to clear the snow?

Our own employees do all the initial plowing after a storm but snow removal requires more equipment and manpower than we have available.

It's also more economical to rent some of the more specialized, expensive equipment than to purchase it. A grader, for instance, would cost around \$500,000 and would only be used about 10-15 times a year.

So our own crews take care of about half the job and we hire contractors for the other half.

Why doesn't the Town blow snow onto lawns instead of trucking it away?

We're extremely lucky to have a snow dump here in Town. It makes our removal operation highly efficient. Without a local snow dump, it would likely be more efficient to blow snow onto lawns as some communities do.

Our costs are measured by the time it takes the crews to clear the snow. And it's actually much faster to blow the snow into trucks than onto lawns, where the operator must stop constantly to aim the blower away from driveways, gardens, walkways, etc.

That said, under certain circumstances we have no choice but to blow onto lawns. When our snow dump is nearly full, we must resort to blowing on lawns. We've witnessed this in some very heavy snow years.

Why is the snow from the southern end of Town removed last?

The removal operation is planned to maximize efficiency. The centre of Town has its snow removed first with crew #1, to clear the route to the snow dump (behind the Arena) and make Westminster accessible.

The north end is the next priority (usually with crew #2) fo-

cused around Edinburgh and its high density streets like Radcliffe.

Finally, both crews tackle the southern end. This is the most challenging area because the trucks must navigate around the train schedule which can slow the operation considerably. So, frequently, both crews are put on this job to ensure it can be completed in less time, between rush hours.

Using this method, the whole Town can be cleared in three-four days.

What are some of the biggest obstacles to snow removal in Town?

The biggest obstacles are literally "obstacles" in the way of clearing operations: vehicles that remain on the street after the warning signs are posted; cars in driveways that stick out onto the sidewalk, impeding the sidewalk plows; and snow pushed onto the street and sidewalk by residents and contractors.

Our sidewalk equipment, in particular, can only handle so much snow accumulation which is why some sidewalks may remain blocked until the snow can be removed.

Please send me your questions and I'll try to incorporate them into my next article.