



Transportation

Winter weather response frequently asked questions (FAQs)

Q: Who should I contact in an emergency?

A:

- For life-threatening emergencies, call 9-1-1.
- To report flooding, blocked or hazardous streets and sidewalks, fallen trees and similar problems, call the city's 24-hour response line at 425-452-7840.
9-1-1 is for emergencies only!
- Call Puget Sound Energy at 1-888-225-5773 to report a power outage. Do not touch or drive over downed power lines.

Q: How can I stay informed during a storm?

A:

- During significant weather events, information is posted on the city's homepage at BellevueWA.gov.
- Check the city's Twitter ([@BellevueWA](https://twitter.com/BellevueWA) and [@BvueTrans](https://twitter.com/BvueTrans)) and Facebook ([Facebook.com/bellevuewashington](https://www.facebook.com/bellevuewashington)).
- Street closures are posted at BellevueWA.gov/traffic-advisories.
- Visit our beta winter event response map at BellevueWA.gov/winter-response-map to see the progress of snow and ice response efforts.
- View our traffic camera feeds to check out the status of roads around the city at Trafficmap.BellevueWA.gov.
- For highway information, check the state Department of Transportation website (WSDOT.wa.gov) and Twitter feed ([@WSDOT](https://twitter.com/WSDOT)).
- Sign up for Bellevue-specific alerts at our snow and ice webpage at BellevueWA.gov/winter.
- Sign up for regional alerts from King County at KingCounty.gov/Alert.

Q: Should I call in for my street to be plowed/serviced?

A: During a city-wide weather event, the city receives hundreds of calls from residents requesting plowing/servicing to their respective streets. Conditions will always drive the city's response and adhering to our plowing response plan is critical for keeping our road system operational. **Pulling crews off of their assigned routes will not occur unless there is a medical emergency directed by Police, Fire or deemed necessary by our snow and ice dispatch center.**

Excessive calls requesting plowing can slow down the efforts to clear and service streets. Note that the city's plowing efforts will not end until all of our routes have been cleared.

Q: I saw a plow on my street - why is there still snow/ice on the road?

A: Once the snow becomes compact and freezes, we need to treat the snow and ice with a calcium chloride (deicer) and sand mixture to break down the ice. It can take multiple passes of a snowplow and multiple treatments of product before the ice can finally be removed. If it starts snowing again, this process gets disrupted because our plows need to move back to servicing the primary arterials to ensure they remain passable, especially for emergency vehicles.

Q: What does the city do to prepare for winter weather?

A: Each year, the Transportation Department is fully prepared for winter weather by the start of November. Preparations include training staff, ensuring there are adequate supplies like anti-icer and regular vehicle maintenance. The city has 15 trucks that can be configured with plows and sanders, and 60 staff ready to respond when winter weather hits. During a snowstorm, city staff work 24/7 to clear roads. One truck with a plow and sander is always ready to go, but the rest of the vehicles are used for regular daily operations and fitted with plows and sanders only when snow or ice is forecast. During a major storm, up to 30 employees from several city departments work at a time in two 12-hour shifts.

Q: What is the city's policy on clearing streets of ice and snow?

A: During conditions of ice and snow, the city strives to provide passable routes for emergency, commercial and private vehicles on the city's public roads. Passable means that someone with the appropriate equipment, driving ability and judgment, traveling at an appropriate speed, can travel on the street once it has been serviced. Streets are prioritized for plowing based on a [snow response map](#) that considers access for emergency services, transit, school bus traffic volume and other factors. If snowfall is continuous, these major routes may require repeated plowing and sanding before crews are able to clear neighborhood streets.

Q: What impacts the city's ability to clear the streets of ice and snow?

A: Most ice and snow occur at higher elevations, such as in the Cougar Mountain/Lakemont, Somerset and Newport areas. The resources the city has are usually sufficient to service priority routes and residential streets when winter conditions are limited to the areas with higher elevations. During a city-wide event, however, the available resources must be used to service a much larger

area. When that happens, even priority routes may receive limited attention and residential streets may not get cleared at all. This is especially the case when snowfall is continuous, as major routes may require repeated plowing and sanding before crews are able to clear neighborhood streets.

Q: I live on a steep street. Why don't city crews clear it after it snows?

A: Sometimes, it is not safe for the city's large snow-clearing equipment to drive on steep, residential streets. At other times, it may be a matter of priority. Streets are prioritized for plowing based on a [snow response map](#) that considers access for emergency services, transit, school bus traffic volume and other factors. Arterial streets that serve many people and provide access are cleared instead of steeper, less traveled streets.

Q: Why does the city close roads after a snowfall?

A: Bellevue does not automatically close roads, but some streets may be closed for safety reasons due to specific circumstances. Sometimes, roads must be closed to traffic temporarily while snowplows service them. Closure decisions are made on a case-by-case basis.

Q: What should I do if I must park and leave my car?

A: Police recommend you make every attempt to move your vehicle completely off the roadway; parallel park your car as close to the curb as possible if you must park on the road. Do not park sideways on the road or in an intersection. If you must park your car in a place where it is not legal to leave it parked, leave your phone number visible on the dashboard. Abandoned vehicles in the road will be towed as soon as possible. To avoid being impounded, return to your vehicle as soon as is practical.

Q: Does the city use anti-icers or deicers? Are they bad for the environment?

A: When conditions warrant, before a snowstorm, the Transportation Department sprays the streets with a calcium chloride-based liquid anti-icer that prevents ice from adhering to the pavement. The product is applied when the forecast calls for dry conditions prior to icing or snow. If snow or ice does build up on streets, a solid deicer containing calcium chloride is mixed into the sand. It's more environmentally benign than sodium chloride (salt). Streets that are sanded are swept after the snow and ice are gone to limit the amount of sand that ends up in storm drains.

Q: What should I do to prepare for ice and snow in Bellevue?

A: When bad weather is in the forecast, please plan ahead. If you must travel,

prepare first, and allow extra time to reach your destination. Some tips include:

- Practice putting on your tire chains at home before you need them.
- Put on traction tires if you have them.
- Check your anti-freeze levels, washer fluid, and wipers, and ensure that your heater and defroster work properly.
- Have an ice scraper/snow brush and other essentials for your car. Visit [WSDOT.gov/winter](https://www.wsdot.gov/winter) for a checklist of other items to have in your car to be prepared.
- Purchase a snow shovel. Clearing your sidewalk of snow helps keep people who are walking and rolling safe.
- Buy shoes with good grip, ice grippers to put on your shoes, a walking stick or other mobility safety devices to help with walking in winter conditions.

Q: What can I do to improve safety when driving on ice and snow?

A:

- Avoid driving and stay home if it is possible to do so.
- Drive for the current conditions:
 - Drive slower.
 - Allow more time to stop.
 - Leave more space between you and the vehicle in front of you.
 - Allow yourself extra time to reach your destination.
 - Do not use cruise control.
- Watch out for black ice. Roads that seem dry or just wet may be slippery. Use caution and drive slowly when approaching intersections, off-ramps, bridges or shady areas
- Give snowplows room to work. The plows are wide and can cross the centerline or shoulder. Do not tailgate and try not to pass. If you must pass, use extreme caution and beware of the snow cloud.
- Never slam the brakes. If you have anti-lock brakes, press the pedal down firmly and hold it. If you don't, gently pump the pedal.
- Completely clear snow off your lights, windows and roof of your vehicle. Snow left on the roof can fall on your windshield or the windshield of vehicles around you while you are driving, which is very dangerous.