



For Immediate Release

Contact: Peter Donovan
(360) 630-6246
peterd@mountvernonwa.gov

February 6, 2019

MOUNT VERNON—We get a lot of calls about snowy and icy road conditions in Mount Vernon. Some callers thank the City for its efforts to clear the roads, and some call with advice on how they would clear the roads if they worked in our Public Works Department.

In this short break between winter storms, we thought it might be a good time to summarize how the City of Mount Vernon strategizes its approach to making our roads safe, and to review what those of us who drive these city streets can do to improve conditions.

First of all, ***slow your roll, Dale Earnhardt!*** Give yourself extra time to get to where you're going. If there is compact snow and ice on the street; accelerate gradually, keep your speed low, and begin braking far ahead of the intersection you will be stopping at.

When snowstorms hit, our city streets department often works overnight using 8 snow plows to plow the city's main arterial streets (see map), and then tends to the hills, the "feeder" streets, and some of the more heavily traveled residential streets. It is important to keep in mind that resources do not exist to clear every city street down to dry pavement. It is up to those of us who drive the streets to navigate them slowly and safely. And once a street is packed down to a hard layer of snow and ice, snow plows are ineffective at removing the ice.

What about salt? Salt is used to melt snow on some roads, but it is not a cure-all. Even salt water freezes (at 28.4 degrees), and the nighttime temperatures have been well below that lately.

Let's put sand on everything! Sand is used to create better friction on icy surfaces, but it is not used without consequences to the public's drainage and ecosystems. It also requires time and resources to clean up, after the cold weather is gone. Sand is used on icy Mount Vernon streets, but it is used strategically, and not on every street.

The snow plows have blocked my driveway (or my parked car) with snow! Yep. Mine too. A snow plow driver has *one* priority—to clear crucial roadways so that the community at-large (including first responders) can get to where they need to go. We should never expect the plows to use what little time they have to clear each private driveway. That's our job! Some of us shovel it ourselves, and some of us hire the neighbor kid to do it. But all of us are grateful that we don't live in a region where we have to shovel out of our driveway several times a week, throughout the winter!

So, breathe. Whether you love the winter weather, or you can't wait for spring; this will all melt away soon enough. Until then, let's practice conscientious driving. The city's road-clearing efforts provide us with a safer foundation, but keeping our streets accident-free is the responsibility of all of us who get behind the wheel.

