GENERAL INFORMATION

The elevation of Placer County ranges from near sea level to over 7,000 feet. The County maintains over 1,100 miles of roadways. About 200 miles of these roads fall within expected "normal" snowfall areas on both sides of the Sierra Crest. Snowfall amounts in these areas range from less than 100 inches to over 500 inches annually depending on location and elevation. The Tahoe Basin (the east side of the Sierra Crest) has about 135 miles of roads within its boundaries. The terrain in these snowfall areas is often very steep with many curves offering a variety of challenges to driving as well as to snow removal and ice control operations.

Facts

- 1. Placer County has the highest average annual snowfall of any County in the lower 48 states.
- 2. In California, Placer County consistently ranks in the top 3, behind CALTRANS, for annual expenditures on snow removal this includes all Cities and Counties!

It is the goal of Placer County to plow these roads often enough to keep them passable to traffic and as free of snow and ice as possible. To do this, it is often necessary for the County to become a 7-day a week, 24-hour a day operation during storms and throughout the cleanup stages following the storms. In order to cover the many miles of roads in the most efficient and timely manner, it is necessary to remove the snow in a way that minimizes time consuming tasks. Certain patterns and techniques have proven over time to help efficiency. The purpose of using these methods is to get the job done in a way that provides the best overall benefit to the most people.

Equipment for these operations usually consists of 3 basic types. Truck mounted push plows are used to push snow from the center of the roads to the sides. Graders with front mounted push plows, in addition to the centermounted blades, are used to push snow from the center to the sides and also to remove the packed snow from the roads. Rotary Plows or Snow Blowers are used to remove snow from the sides of the roads by blowing it back behind the stakes to widen the roads and make room for future snowfall. In addition, Sand Spreaders are usually used after the snow stops falling to help aid traction on the hills, turns and near intersections.



WEBCAMS

Below are links to web cams in the Sierra Nevada area that provide real-time visuals of current conditions:

Lake Tahoe Area

www.laketahoeconditions.com/lake-tahoe-webcam.htm

State of California

http://video.dot.ca.gov/ It may be necessary to refresh or reload these pages to obtain current information.

NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE

The following link provides current weather conditions for the Tahoe Basin area:

Tahoe Basin Area

http://forecast.weather.gov/MapClick.php?CityName=Tahoe+City&state=CA&site=REV&textField1=39.1722&textField2=-120.138&e=0

Please remember to refresh this page to get current conditions and forecasts.

CONTACT INFORMATION

DPW/ROAD DIVISION 530-889-7565

PLACER COUNTY ROAD CONDITIONS 530-581-6220

www.placer.ca.gov/Departments/Works.aspx

CALTRANS INTERSTATES AND HIGHWAYS 1-800-427-ROAD (7623)

This CALTRANS link provides useful Winter Driving Tips, and remember always carry your chains.

www.dot.ca.gov/hq/roadinfo/wntrdriv.htm

STATE OF NEVADA (877) NVROADS, or 1 (877) 687-6237

www.nevadadot.com

TOWN OF TRUCKEE 530-582-7700

www.townoftruckee.com/snowremov.html





Placer County Snow Blower in Operation

SNOW PLOWING OPERATIONS

Snow is normally plowed from the center to both sides of the roads by the plows so that the blowers can then blow the snow away to provide storage for future snowfall. In most cases it is plowed equally to both sides of the roadway to allow for the most efficient snow removal. Some roads may be too wide to cover in one pass. Also, when removing packed snow and ice from the roadway it may require several passes to remove it. We try not to push more snow to one side or the other; however, near intersections or cul-de-sacs, the amounts may not be equal due to the way that these areas must be plowed. The County tries to minimize these impacts when we can.



Snow Gates

In 2005, Placer County began purchasing new graders with "snow gates". As of November 2008, we have 8 graders with snow gates for use in the Tahoe Basin. Snow gates on graders reduce, but do not eliminate, the size of a berm left in a driveway by a snow grader. Truck mounted push plows do not have snow gates.

Research and experience show that snow gates can work well in areas with flatter terrain and lower snowfall amounts, up to 6" in depth.

From 6" – 12" in depth, the gates are increasingly ineffective, and over twelve 12", the gates are ineffective and a detriment to the snow removal operation. We are committed to using the gates whenever possible and practical, however, problems arise in areas with heavy snowfall and steep terrain or areas where long parking pads or multiple driveways don't allow the snow to be discharged from the blades for long distances. In these cases, snow can build up to the point of actually stopping the grader or leaving snow in the traveled way.

The following link explains the functions of the Snow Gate. www.youtube.com/watch?v=N8nwa41y6sA

SNOW BLOWING OPERATION

A typical snow removal operation involves two rounds of plowing, followed by widening, or "cutting", with snow blowers. Blowing snow is a much slower and expensive operation than plowing; hence, the County waits until there is enough snow on the sides of the road to warrant blowing. It could be anywhere from a few hours to several days before your street is blown, depending on conditions.

The County tries to blow the snow back as far as is practical to allow for storage later in the winter and to allow us to see your homes and driveways better. In many areas, the County has right of way or a snow storage easement that is utilized as much as possible.

The County tries not to blow snow in driveways or parking areas. Occasionally, the operator doesn't see them or miscalculates the distance to them. This is especially true of circle type, angled driveways or parking areas hidden by high berms or banks. You can help minimize risk by marking your driveway with a small sign. If snow is blown into your driveway, you may want to notify the County or the operator. Although we may not be able to remove it, we may be able to make note of it for future operations.

SCHEDULE

Weather conditions, timing of storms, and a number of other things all factor into when streets get plowed or when we begin and end our snow removal operation. Different areas of the County get different amounts of snow, and low elevation freezes drastically impact our ability to service all areas in a timely manner. In an "average" storm, we will attempt to plow each street once during a 12-hour shift. Snow plowing is available at night. In extended and/or heavy storms requiring around-the-clock (24-hour) snow removal, our motto is "we plow until we're done".

PERSONNEL

There are 11 regular employees in Tahoe, 10 in Colfax/Soda Springs, and 9 in Foresthill. These three crews handle regular road maintenance duties throughout the year, and are the initial response units for regular snow removal in their areas. These crews are supplemented by extra seasonal help and manpower using County employees located in the Valley. During heavy storms, nearly 75% of the Road Division personnel are involved in snow removal. As much as 15% to 20% of the total annual road maintenance budget is spent on Snow Removal and Ice Control.

PARKING

County Ordinance (Chapter 10, Article 12, Part 1) prohibits parking on roadway shoulders between November 1 and May 1 (http://qcode.us/codes/placercounty). Compliance will help avoid damage to your vehicle as well as County equipment, but most importantly, it will not slow down the snow removal operation. Illegally parked vehicles are subject to tickets/fines and may be towed if necessary. Don't assume that the outside of the snow berm is the edge of the roadway as the snow will be removed to the stakes by the blower when it comes by.

OTHER USEFUL TIPS

- Expect at least a small snow berm each time your street is plowed, a larger one if there is more than 12" of snow in the roadway. Even with snow gates, a small berm is left. Don't shovel or blow snow back into the roadway, as this is illegal and you could be cited or expose yourself to liability if an accident or property damage occurs.
- To make removing the berm easier, try to shovel it next to the bank on the side of the road beyond your driveway before it freezes or gets packed down from driving over it. Also consider asking your snow removal service if it would be



possible to clean your driveway after your street has been plowed to avoid a berm in your recently cleaned driveway.

- Snow stakes are placed along the roadways as a guide to the snow plows to help prevent damage to property and equipment. Please do not remove snow stakes.
- Placing your trash cans in your driveway, behind the snow stakes, on the up traffic side instead of in the street will help to avoid the plow hitting them or knocking them down on garbage pickup days.
- Try to leave room for snow storage by minimizing the size of your driveway and parking areas as much as possible. Circle type and angled driveways or hidden parking spots are hard for plow operators to see and should be avoided if possible. Consider marking these areas if you have them to reduce the possibility of snow being blown into them.
- Don't allow children to dig snow tunnels, sled or ski in or near the streets or to play around the snow equipment. Don't approach a piece of snow equipment while it is working until the operator sees you and stops the machine and all of its moving parts. These practices are very dangerous and may put you or your children at risk.
- Don't abandon your car on the roadway even if you get stuck. It
 could be subject to fines and tow-away. It may also be the cause of
 your street and others in your area not getting plowed.
- Leaving a light on in your house can help the plow operator to realize that there is a house/garage on the other side of the berm.
- Be ready for the unexpected. Carry tire chains or cables and be prepared to install them if necessary.