

SafetyAlert

We're Serious About Safety

Snow Plow Safety

Plow operators serve the community well during some of the worst weather – it is important that EVERYONE, including you the plow operator, gets home safely in the snow.

While most people are relaxing at home during a winter snowstorm, municipal snowplow operators take to the roads clearing snow and ice accumulations, so the “motoring public” can travel safely around our communities.

It is no surprise that operating snowplowing trucks and equipment along a municipal roadway is much different than plowing driveways and parking lots. A driver must be alert to people walking/standing near the road, parked cars on the shoulder, snowmobile and vehicle traffic, children playing, etc. Needless to say, a snowplow operator’s attention cannot be distracted for a single moment!

Snow plow safety is something every snow plow driver must be aware of. Blowing, drifting snow mixed with slick pavement provides for

hazardous driving conditions. It is important that all new snowplow operators receive detailed classroom and field training and are closely monitored and supervised by a responsible/qualified person.

Drivers cannot be allowed to “learn as they go.” Statistics have shown that snowplow-related accidents involve both new and experienced drivers. Therefore, we highly recommend all experienced drivers receive refresher training each year before winter snowplow season begins.



Defensive Driving

A professional snowplow operator must be a defensive driver at all times. A defensive driver must continuously stay alert to the behavior of other drivers and make every effort to avoid an accident.

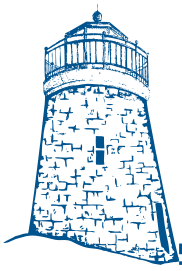
- Be aware of your surroundings and know your route.
- Always make sure you know what possible obstacles are within your plowing area like mailboxes, fences, posts, etc. This can save damage to property and your plow, which in the long run will save money.
- Always be tolerant and patient with other drivers or pedestrians around you. Seeing a huge truck drive toward you with a plow on the front is not always the most pleasant thing.
- Watch your speed! This is a huge mistake many plow drivers make when going about their jobs. In fact, many of the accidents involving snow plows are created because the driver was going too fast for the weather conditions. It might get the job done faster, but it is not worth the injuries to yourself, the plow, or possibly someone else. Make sure you are constantly keeping an eye out for ice or obstacles. It is also helpful to know the road and weather conditions before leaving to plow.
- Obey all traffic laws (i.e., wearing your seatbelt). This will save each driver trouble with law enforcement and could save a life in the event of an accident.
- Make sure you cut off all power to the snow plow and spreader before leaving the vehicle after you have done your job.
- Get a good night’s rest before going out to plow. Although this is sometimes impossible to do, make sure that you are not feeling too drowsy or sleepy. Falling asleep at the wheel is obviously a devastating and potentially fatal mistake.



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Snow Plow Operations

There are four (4) important considerations to a snow plow operation. They include, but are not limited to, the considerations listed below.

1. Driver Training – Snowplow operators should be trained in the standard operating procedures (SOP) of your organization's winter maintenance program. This includes knowledge of assigned equipment and assigned snow routes. Becoming familiar with snowplow routes before the snow starts flying has many benefits. Identifying and/or correcting problems early can help save equipment down-time and repair expenses. Items to look for include raised manhole covers and curb drains, concrete hazards, road surface defects, soft/narrow shoulders, etc.

2. Trucks and Equipment Readiness – Trucks and equipment must be road worthy and ready to meet the needs of winter activities. An effective preventive maintenance program is the key to ensuring your equipment has minimal breakdowns. Ask any fleet manager. Roadside breakdowns are less likely when inspections are performed and problems identified and corrected in advance. Drivers should never take a vehicle inspection program lightly. Any driver performing a "driver's seat inspection" is substituting safety with foolishness! Finally, drivers must operate their equipment with care and respect. Abusive behavior can prematurely cause trucks and equipment to breakdown.

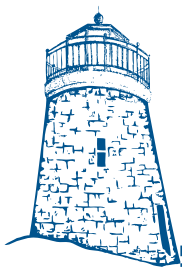
3. Well Rested Drivers – Snowplow operators not getting proper rest can play a major role in snow plow-related accidents. Compound a fatigued driver with poor weather conditions and you can have the formula for disaster. All drivers should be made aware of causes and symptoms of driver fatigue and how to prevent it.

4. Drugs and Alcohol – The federal drug and alcohol regulations for CDL safety sensitive duties, have helped cut down on truck-related accidents over the years. These regulations hold companies and drivers accountable for their drugs and alcohol consumption. Surprisingly, some drivers think they can beat the system by violating these rules during evenings and weekends. Employees should be routinely reminded about the importance of drug avoidance, including the use of certain prescription and over the counter drugs. Alcohol consumption is illegal prior to and during the performance of safety sensitive jobs. If drivers are called to plow snow soon after consuming alcohol, they must understand the consequences.



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Driver Safety Tips

- Start work physically and mentally rested and properly clothed.
- Check all equipment before each use. Inspect the lights, brakes, windshield wipers, defroster, plow bolts and chains, spreader and auger, flares and other safety equipment.
- Know your route. Perform pre-storm route inspection observing landmarks and the locations of possible hazards (guardrails, curbs, railroad tracks, bridge joints, mailboxes, manhole covers, etc.) which may be hidden by falling or plowed snow.
- Choose the speed appropriate for conditions. Resist the urge to get the job done in a hurry.
- Be considerate of motorists having trouble driving in the snow. Keep your temper and patience when vehicles pass or tailgate.
- Be brief when using the radio. Report stranded motorists and other emergencies when possible.
- Observe all traffic laws and signal your intentions clearly. Remember to wear your seatbelt.
- Before leaving the cab, set the brakes and disengage the power to the spreader and snowplow.



Watch for signs of fatigue. Staring for hours at the driving snow can have a hypnotizing effect on drivers. You don't want this to happen! The long hours and stress can take their toll as well. If you feel the onset of fatigue, take a short break – get out and walk around the truck and take some deep breaths.



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