

We have already had enough snow to track a rabbit so as the tale goes, we should have eight or nine snow storms this season. As with everyone else, the Road Department has a plan in place for when snow storms attempt to shut everything down.

Planning snow removal routes is easy on paper but Mother Nature usually has a plan of her own with complete disregard to what is written. Each of the blade operators has a route in their area with the oil roads, mail and bus routes as a priority. Depending on what we are dealt will dictate what route we take as snow storms are random and rarely seem the same. For the most part dealing with the snow isn't too bad, the wind placing the snow is usually the issue. Some days the snow is on the east/west roads while and the next day the same snow may be on the north/south roads, other times the crops/stubble in the adjacent fields will store much of the snow as will the ditches of elevated roads - one never knows until we get there. Regardless the goal of the Road Department is to have one lane open on the first day, wind permitting, with clean-up the following days; widening out, mail box approaches, drives... A word of caution to those that clean their drives and approaches is that when you push the snow across the road always move all of the snow across; don't push the snow into the road and wait for us to move it away and don't leave tailings perpendicular to the road after we have passed as this creates a hazard to those traveling (usually a frozen surprise).

We will more than likely start early on days when snow removal happens; most generally communication with the Director of Transportation or Superintendent at the schools has occurred the night before so they can plan their school day. Snow removal is done at a higher rate of speed than regular road maintenance (usually greater than 20 mph compared to 7 or 8 mph). The higher speeds will move the snow farther away from the road allowing room for subsequent snow storms, depending on the weight of the snow this is generally when mailboxes are damaged. If snow does take the mailbox out and we see it go the Post Master will be notified and the repairs will be made, if we don't see the mailbox leave please call us and we will make the repairs as soon as possible. It might be a good idea to check your mailboxes now as what we see is either dry rot in the posts or the screws rusted off. With the exception of the oil roads, we may leave an inch or so of snow on the road so we don't get into the rock or dirt but we may try to bump the shoulder of the road occasionally to define the shoulder. We do try to blade the oil tighter but with wheel ruts in the oil it is impossible to remove all of the snow. Our snow removal day will generally end on the roads about sunset and some equipment repairs may be made at that time if we can get through the ice and snow. By this time of the day, operators are usually exhausted, our response times are decreased and poor decisions/accidents start happening.

One thing that has changed is a policy on removing stuck vehicles. In the past we have assisted drivers of stuck vehicles if they requested it and we were there, due to an incident last year and in working with our insurance company no vehicle will be pulled out without a release being signed. Each operator will carry this with them and if there is a refusal to sign or comply, we will move on without removing the vehicle.

Should you have any questions or comments regarding this document, feel free to call the Box Butte County Road Department at 308-762-6797. Have a great November and Thanksgiving.