

Snow FAQ

Why doesn't the City plow residential streets after every storm?

Colorado's sunny climate melts most snows in a day or two and plowing residential streets is expensive. If snow crews were to plow all residential streets after every storm, the city's plowing operation costs would increase significantly.

How soon can I expect a plow to come down my street?

Residential streets are only plowed after a Class III snowstorm, after all other City streets have been plowed. We can't give an exact time estimate but it can take a couple days after the storm before all residential streets are reached even with crews working around the clock.

During Class III storms, why is only one lane plowed on residential streets?

There are three reasons. First is time — it is important to reach as many streets as possible in a short period of time. This enables more residents to get around as soon as possible after the storm. Plowing two lanes would take twice as long, which means some residents would have to wait even longer to see a City plow. Second reason is room — due to parking on the streets, there is not room to plow two full lanes, and one pass will provide an 8-foot lane. The time involved to provide another 3-4 feet is not time-effective. Third — during major snowstorms there is no additional room on residential streets to store snow.

Why aren't residential streets plowed down to the pavement?

Usually, by the time a plow reaches a residential street, cars have driven over the snow and compacted it down making it difficult to remove. Snowplows are designed to push snow off to the side, they are not designed to cut into or remove packed snow and ice. In addition, because the City does not truck snow out of neighborhoods, there is no room to store additional snow if the City were to attempt to plow down to the pavement.

Why not go back later to widen the lanes in residential areas?

By the time the City would send in a second plow, most residents will have dug out their parked cars and cleared their driveways. The last thing they want to see is a snowplow piling snow back in areas they have worked so hard to clear. The City will go back and look at safety issues or large ruts.

Why are some streets plowed curb to curb and others, are not?

Most major streets are plowed curb to curb. Streets are plowed curb to curb to provide for good traffic movement and to allow for adequate drainage once the snow starts to melt. Also, major streets usually have detached sidewalks that are not covered by the snow plow. Plowing curb to curb in residential areas would result in covered sidewalks and blocked driveways.

In a recent heavy storm there was so much snow that the plows did end up covering my sidewalk. Code Compliance said I must make a path, does that mean I have to move all that snow? City crews make every effort to not cover sidewalks with snow. However, in the event snowplows push snow onto your sidewalk, additional snow removal is still required in accordance with the City Code.

Why don't you just load the snow up and haul it away?

Cost and time! Snow removal is extremely expensive. Additional equipment would have to be purchased or contracted, and, if purchased, additional people would have to be hired. It would also take significantly longer to complete residential neighborhoods. And, due to the sand and other chemicals used to treat streets, leftover snow cannot be dumped onto parks where the chemicals could harm vegetation.

Why do you have to plow and make noise in the middle of the night?

In order to clear all of the City streets as quickly as possible our crews work 24 hours a day. If we only plowed residential streets during the day it would take twice as long to reach everyone. While many residents sleep at night there are still many residents such as police and other emergency workers, which need roads to be cleared at night so they can get to work.

I saw a City snow plow driving around during the storm with its blade up – why wasn't it plowing?

There are a number of reasons why a plow would be traveling with its plow up:

Snowplows do not have down pressure and are equipped with a rubber cutting edge. When snow is packed and frozen, the plow will not remove any ice.

Heavy equipment is used to remove "Ice Jams" and is assigned to specific problem areas. It will travel there with the blade up.

How can I find out if my trash will still be collected during the storm?

The City makes every effort to collect trash until conditions become too hazardous for our drivers.

To find out if the City has scheduled a trash delay, visit www.cityofthornton.net, city social media accounts or call 720-977-6200.