



City of  
**VANCOUVER**  
WASHINGTON



# communityconnection

*An e-newsletter featuring the latest news, information and announcements about City of Vancouver, WA programs and projects.*

## PUBLIC MEETINGS/EVENTS

## LATEST NEWS

**Monday Jan. 5,**

[City Council Meeting](#)

### Taking Stock

*by Brian Carlson, Public Works Director*

The big 2008 Arctic Blast has past, but the work of carefully considering our response has just begun.

The City of Vancouver is proud of its dedicated Public Works street crews, who plowed and deiced streets round-the-clock from Dec. 15 through Dec. 26, as well as all those who answered calls, and dealt with equipment, water, grounds, facilities and garbage problems during the recent December marathon of severe weather.

We are still pulling together all of the information needed to take stock of our efforts during 2008 Arctic Blast. Based on what we've gathered to date, Vancouver Public Works:

- plowed approximately 11,000 lane miles of streets
- applied approximately 120,000 gallons of sodium-based brine deicer
- applied approximately 30 tons of solid granular sodium (salt) deicer, used mainly on steep slopes

Estimates so far indicate Vancouver's total cost for this event will be close to \$500,000. That figure includes labor, equipment and materials, as well as regular straight time along with overtime. When we subtract out the regular expenses that would have occurred in our normal 8-hour day and isolate the true additional costs – overtime, materials and equipment – the storm cost appears to be about \$150,000.

We used no sanding rock during this event. The particulates you may have seen along the streets as snow melted and traffic surged was just regular grime that gets brought in on tires and vehicles, and would normally get swept up and washed away under different conditions. The city switched to salt brine and granular deicer in 2007 after careful consideration of our winter needs, weather history, costs and environmental studies conducted by the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) and Washington State University. What we found is that by using sodium chloride in granular or liquid solution, we have been able to reduce costs, better manage supplies and be more effective in keeping streets passable. And our salt-brine solution doesn't require extensive cleanup afterward like sanding rock does, which would probably have added another \$200,000 to \$250,000 the 2008 Arctic Blast total costs.

Snowstorms of this size and duration are not a common occurrence for Vancouver, thankfully. Winters here are generally rainy and mostly temperate, as winters go. When it does snow here, it rarely stays for long. So when winter storms hit us hard, we must focus and prioritize our efforts. These priorities are spelled out in Vancouver Public Works' plan for snow and freezing weather. The plan summary is posted on our street maintenance web pages ([www.cityofvancouver.us/streets](http://www.cityofvancouver.us/streets)) each winter. This year as in year's past, as soon as forecasts warned of severe weather, we also posted the policy on the city's home page, front and center.

In short, Vancouver now has about 1,800 lane miles of streets. Using 13 full snowplow trucks, 10 of which are also multi-use deicers, our crews' first priority is the critical network of arterials that connect police, fire and hospital services. Second in line are remaining arterials, selected collectors, snow bus routes and key streets around schools and hills. Third, the remaining collectors and public parking lots. Fourth, residential streets and alleys. Fact is, during major storms, just keeping the first priority critical streets open and passable is a process that has to be repeated over and over again. Residential streets rarely get plowed due to demands of critical arterials and the city's limited resources.

Plenty went right during this past winter storm. But taking stock also means looking at where we can improve and what that means in terms of staff, equipment, services and budget.

Options already being considered include possible formal Council adoption of a snow plan and posting of a GIS-enabled web version of our plowing/deicing street priorities. Questions being considered include: What would be the cost of adding small plows to some four-wheel drive pickups to assist with residential streets and how many of our streets could actually be reached that way? Would it be worth the percentage of streets covered and the amount of snowfall we typically get? Should Vancouver exercise a parking ban on key streets in advance of likely snow events so it's easier to get big equipment through to plow and deice? What level of service do our residents and businesses expect and support?

We'll be discussing the winter storm, our response and results with the City Council at a workshop in early February. We also plan to meet with neighborhood, business and other community leaders to get their input about what went well, where improvements are needed, and how we might assist in bringing community together to help. We'll also look at gathering public input through an informal, online survey.

One aftereffect of this snowstorm event was the many "road buttons" that have been displaced or damaged as a result of plowing and tire chains. These will either be replaced or the pavement striped during the coming months as the weather warms, the pavement is dry and resources allow.

In the meantime, we're working hard to repair the potholes caused by a week of temperatures in the teens. On Monday and Tuesday alone city crews patched some 150 potholes, many on the east side of Vancouver. We'll continue our Pothole Patrol over the next few weeks. Vancouver residents can help by reporting potholes by calling 696-8177 or by going online at [www.cityofvancouver.us/AtYourService](http://www.cityofvancouver.us/AtYourService) and clicking on service requests. Our goal is to patch those potholes within 48 hours of receiving your request.

Best wishes for a great New Year,  
Brian Carlson, Director of Public Works, City of Vancouver

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