

Inclement Weather - Road Maintenance Procedures

Line of Business: General Liability, Public Officials Liability

Risk Control Strategy/Key Issues: Developing a pro-active procedure for maintenance of roadways during inclement weather will increase entities ability to act effectively.

Suggested Program Elements:

1. Policy Statement:

Develop a policy describing the goals of the entity in responding to inclement weather conditions and explaining the importance of keeping key road ways open during inclement weather conditions. Explain the importance of keeping roadways open during bad weather, and during serious weather conditions police, fire and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) must be able to move about to protect the public.

Assign program responsibility to one individual (usually the public works/streets and roads department head) and provide that individual with the management authority to carry out the mission.

Clearly describe the role of each involved employee or team of employees when a response is necessary appointing crews, designating a supervisor or lead-worker for each, and a process for communication between crews, between a crew and management and between all members of the crisis response program if this is triggered by weather conditions.

2. Program:

Develop response criteria ranking inclement conditions in order of seriousness. An extremely dangerous weather event may activate all staff while less serious weather may require only a few crews. There should be no confusion among the crew members who is to respond to a particular level of threat.

Provide a list of resources available to each crew for each event and the location of those resources. For snowy conditions it should be clear where snow removal equipment is housed, when the stores of sand or deicing chemicals are maintained, etc. In case of a major flood, large earthquake, hurricane or tornado, crews should be aware where the emergency communication equipment is stored and where the primary and alternate incident response centers are located.

Train all team members in proper response techniques and include them in any community-wide disaster drills that are conducted. Training should include refresher training on a set schedule (yearly is suggested).

Maintain a list of contractors that can be called upon when needed. Designate a contact person at each contracting firm and agree in advance what role the contractor will play when called. The contractor may be included in any disaster drills or other training staff receives.

3. Inclement weather monitoring:

Appoint an individual to monitor weather forecasts for heavy storms approaching and for emergency alerts given by the weather service. Often the weather service will agree to immediately notify public safety of potential dangerous conditions so the responsible individual should initiate contact with the weather service to set up the notification process.

Develop a calling-tree or communication plan to quickly alert those involved in any response. The plan should put crew members on 'ready-status' at the first sign of a potential storm event. This requires that phone numbers, e-mail addresses for all involved staff must be confirmed at least quarterly to insure the staff member can be reached immediately.

Inspect all vehicles that may be used for a response on a regular basis, and especially just prior to wintertime. As winter or a potential storm event approaches, make sure the vehicles are gassed and ready to perform. Prepare a current list of routes to be plowed and which roads must be plowed first.

Program Activities Calendar:

Seasonally a review of exposures should be conducted and the response plan reviewed to determine whether changes are necessary.

A careful review of responses should be conducted to determine what improvements can be made and what further training could be provided the response crews. The results of the reviews should be shared with all members of the management and response team.

Web Site Links:

- Federal Emergency Management Agency
<http://www.fema.gov>
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
<http://www.noaa.org>
- National Earthquake Information Center
<http://neic.cr.usgs.gov>

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