



Travelling on our roads in winter

advice and information

Transport for Buckinghamshire





Winter service is an important part of Transport for Buckinghamshire's (TfB) maintenance work. It involves salting major roads when there is a risk of ice, clearing snow and reacting to other weather related emergencies.

When, where and why we salt

A fleet of 25 salting lorries treat approximately 1,405km (40%) of Buckinghamshire's road network to make the County's roads safer, reducing collisions and delays caused by ice and snow.

These vehicles provide 24 hour cover, enabling us to respond to changes in weather conditions.

Using five day local weather forecasts, decisions whether to salt or not are based on road temperatures rather than air temperatures.

Salting is likely to take place whenever road temperatures are forecast to fall below 1°C and ice is expected to form.

Salting is normally carried out after the evening traffic peak hour or before the morning traffic peak hour.

With such an extensive road network in Buckinghamshire TfB cannot treat all roads. Gritting routes are reviewed each year and are

based on several factors:

- the flow of the traffic
- bus routes and school traffic
- gradients and bends
- collision record
- adjacent key facilities ('Blue Light' services, schools etc.)
- route accessibility

Why roads may still be icy

No guarantee can be given that roads will always be completely clear of ice or snow.

On average 87% of weather forecasts are accurate, this means that throughout a normal winter there could be 10 days where ice forms on the road that is not forecast and roads remain untreated.

From leaving the depot, precautionary salting routes take a maximum of 2½ hours to complete. If there is a change of forecast, or if we have to wait for rain to clear before we can salt, then road temperatures may fall by 5°C per hour and wet roads may freeze before they are salted.

Roads may still be icy if peak hour snowfall occurs - this is when rain turns to snow coinciding with peak rush hour.

Rain can wash salt off roads, leaving them prone to re-icing.

In severe cold weather, below -8°C, even salt will not prevent ice from forming.

'Hoar frost' can occur on dry roads when early morning dew falls onto a cold road and freezes.

Salt Bins

Salt bins are provided at various locations throughout the County to allow drivers and pedestrians to treat localised icy conditions. Salt from these bins is solely for the use on the public highway and should not be removed for private use.

Salt bins are generally restocked before and during the winter, dependant on prevailing weather conditions.

Transport for Buckinghamshire will consider requests for new salt bins on the public highway, although funding for these bins will need to be provided externally.

Snow Routes

The snow routes are the key roads on the strategic network. They are implemented in times of very severe weather to ensure that our highest priority roads are kept serviceable during the winter period.

These routes will remain a priority during heavy and prolonged snowfall, prolonged icy conditions or critical salt shortages.

This reduced network is only implemented for short durations in exceptional circumstances.

Winter weather conditions

As well as snow TfB deal with:

- **Black ice** - which occurs when conditions are frosty and wet. The ice is clear but looks black against the road surface. This makes it very difficult to see the ice and is consequently very dangerous.
- **Hoar frost** - white crystals that appear on grass and trees and occasionally forms on roads. Hoar frost can make the road surfaces slippery.
- **Freezing rain** - rain that changes to ice as soon as it hits the freezing road surface.

Never assume a road has been salted - Please remember the majority of minor roads will not be salted.

It is always better to travel a little further on a main road that has been treated than use an untreated minor road.

Clearing snow

The Department for Transport's Snow Code gives guidance about clearing snow outside your property, pathways to your property or public spaces.

There is no law stopping you from clearing snow and ice on the pavement outside your home or from public spaces and it is unlikely that you will be sued or held legally responsible for any injuries on the path if you have cleared it carefully.

People using areas affected by snow and ice have responsibility to be careful themselves.

If you are going to remove snow and ice, here are some tips:

- Start as early as possible - it's much easier to clear fresh, loose snow
- Don't use hot water - this will melt the snow, but may replace it with black ice, increasing the risk of injury
- Be a good neighbour - some people may be unable to clear snow and ice on paths from their property
- If shovelling snow, think about where you are going to put it so that it doesn't block people's paths or drainage channels
- Make a pathway down the middle of the area to be cleared first, so you have a clear surface to walk on.



- Spreading some salt on the area you have cleared will help stop ice forming - table salt or dishwasher salt will work, but avoid spreading salt on plants or grass as they may be damaged by it
- Pay particular care and attention to steps and steep gradients
- Use the sun to your advantage - removing the top layer of snow will allow the sun to melt any ice beneath; however you will need to cover any ice with salt to stop it refreezing overnight
- If there's no salt available, sand or ash are good alternatives.

Advice for pedestrians

The majority of footways are not routinely salted. In times of prolonged icy weather, or when snow remains on the ground, the treatment of some major footways e.g. main shopping areas is undertaken, but this still leaves many footways in residential areas untreated.

- Consider whether your journey is essential
- Always wear appropriate footwear
- Delay your journey if possible to allow temperatures to rise and ice or snow to melt
- Avoid footways in the shade. It takes longer for ice or snow to melt on these.

Advice for cyclists

- Cycleways will normally be treated in the same way as footways but take extra care.
- Shaded cycleways are likely to remain icy longer than those in the sun.
- In prolonged periods of icy weather, or when snow remains on the ground, cycleways will be treated in a priority order depending on their use and accessibility.

Prepare before you travel

- Only travel in your car when absolutely necessary
- Allow more time for your journey
- Listen to local and national radio for travel and weather information
- Slow down and leave increased space between you and the vehicle in front

Carry with you in the car:

- * Ice scraper
- * Boots
- * De-icer
- * Shovel
- * Torch
- * Food and drink
- * Warm Clothes
- * First aid kit
- * Blanket
- * Mobile phone

Check:

- Your tyres are at the correct pressures
- Your vehicle lights are working
- Your wiper blades are effective
- Your battery is in good condition and fully charged
- Your anti-freeze is at the right concentration (your garage can do this for you)
- Your windows and mirrors are clear of ice or condensation.

Please remember the majority of minor roads will not be salted.

Never assume a road has been salted.

Always drive to the conditions of the road.



Transport for Buckinghamshire

Visit the TfB Service Information Centre:

www.buckscc.gov.uk/transport

Or telephone:

0845 230 2882

follow us @tfbalerts for:

- Real time information about gritting routes
- Information on current projects and schemes
- Report problems with roads, footpaths and streetlights
- Twitter feed for live gritting updates

For information about Motorways or Trunk Roads contact the Highways Agency: 08457 50 40 30 or go to www.highways.gov.uk

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