

Winter Road Maintenance

January 04, 2023

How does a town decide which roads to plow in the wintertime? Are there certain roads the law requires towns to plow? Is there a process towns are supposed to follow to make these decisions?

Whether a town road must be plowed depends upon its classification. A town must keep its class 1 highways “in good and sufficient repair during all seasons of the year.” 19 V.S.A. § 310(a). Accordingly, class 1 highways must be plowed and maintained through the winter.

On the other hand, a town may maintain its class 4 highways “to the extent required by the necessity of the town [or] the public good and the convenience of the inhabitants of the town.” 19 V.S.A. § 310(b). As such, a selectboard may decide which, if any, of the town’s class 4 roads will be plowed during the winter. The VLCT Municipal Assistance Center (MAC) recommends adopting a class 4 road policy that lists which, if any, class 4 roads will be plowed in the winter. See our [Model Class 4 Highway Policy](#).

When it comes to the town’s class 2 and class 3 highways, the selectboard has some discretion over whether to provide winter maintenance in some cases. However, exercising this discretion must be based upon “safety considerations for the traveling public and municipal employees.” 19 V.S.A. §§ 302(a)(3)(B), 310(a). The process for making this decision is prescribed by state law, which we explain in detail in our [Limiting Winter Town Highway Maintenance Info Sheet](#).

Publication Date

12/12/2023