Winter in West Michigan can be a spectacular time of year with blankets of fresh snow and frosted-tipped foliage. As beautiful as the winter months can be, Mother Nature’s cold snap does impact City operations and how residents interact with City services. This “Winter Preparedness Brief” contains information prepared by Grand Rapids City departments and 311 Customer Service Agents to provide readers with tips and rules on how to survive and thrive during the winter months.

**MARK YOUR CALENDAR:**

**Yard Waste**
The Domtar site at 2001 Butterworth Ave SW will remain open until the second Saturday in December, weather permitting. The site is open 9 a.m. to 4:45 p.m. Monday through Saturday. The site will be closed on Thanksgiving Day, but will be open the Friday and Saturday after. The site remains free for City residents. Curbside collection also runs until early December each year. It usually ends the second Saturday, weather permitting.

**Refuse & Recycling Holiday Schedule**
Refuse and recycling collection is delayed one day following Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year’s Day.

**Shoveling Out Refuse and Recycling Carts**
Three ways to improve chances of uninterrupted Winter pickups

1. Clear a path 3 feet wide from your garbage and recycling cart to the alley or street. Make sure they can be moved freely.
2. Make sure your garbage and recycling cart are shoveled out the night before your collection day.
3. A heavy snowfall within 48 hours of your garbage collection day may make it impossible to shovel out in time. We understand, but please make sure your cart is shoveled out by the following collection day.

Please DO This

- Space cleared on the parkway.
- Cart in the driveway.

Or This

- Cart in the driveway.

NOT This

- Space cleared on the parkway.
**Priority plowing on First Attention Routes**

First Attention streets are the major, high traffic streets in the city such as Monroe Ave, Leonard St, Fulton St and Division Ave. Please be aware that these roads are priority, and sometimes weather conditions will force the snow plows from secondary streets back into the first attention routes. Salt is also applied to first attention streets.

**When do plows go into Secondary Streets or Alleys?**

The Public Services Department (PSD) continually monitors the weather. When more than 3 inches of snow has accumulated on the streets and first attention routes are clear, they may send plows into local roads, depending upon the temperature and current weather forecast. Deicing material is typically not applied to local streets unless there is a hill, severe curvature or special circumstance for doing so.

**New plowing techniques clear roads faster**

Last year, PSD adopted two new techniques to help clear roads faster. Crews began using a “Salt Wetting” technique where plow trucks spray “liquid salt” over the traditional rock salt the trucks spread. Salt wetting has been linked to decreased salt usage and results in faster melting times. The other improvement the City made was fitting plow trucks with side wing plows that extend off the right side of the truck. When stretched out, the wing plows can remove an additional half lane of snow, further improving snow plowing efficiencies.
Sidewalks

The clearing of ice and snow on sidewalks is the responsibility of the property owner. The full width of the sidewalk should be cleared within 24 hours of the accumulation or placement of snow or ice on said sidewalks. Ordinance requires that sidewalks be completely cleared of all snow and ice, down to the concrete.

Shoveling and other techniques

The City of Grand Rapids’ primary objective is to remove snow from the streets. There are a few ways residents can assist with this process. If you have a driveway, please park in the driveway and leave the road clear to be plowed. If on-street parking is your only option, try to change where you park throughout the week and obey any Odd-Even parking restrictions. This will help allow snow to be removed by the plows and not packed down by cars. Lastly, the City asks that residents refrain from shoveling or snow-blowing snow into the streets. Plow trucks will end up pushing it back into driveways the next time they pass. Instead, throw the snow into your yard. We understand that it can be frustrating when plows push snow into driveways, sidewalks, fire hydrants, and mailboxes. Again, the City’s main goal is to clear the street. One technique that can help keep driveways from being blocked, is by shoveling a “corner” of the right-of-way free of snow in the area several feet before the driveway will help keep snow from being pushed into the driveway in an icy, heavy pile. Clearing an area large enough to hold the snow coming off the plow may help reduce the “Second Shovel.”

Assistance

The City does not provide snow removal services for driveways or sidewalks, but various local agencies can provide help. Some suggestions are United Way (2-1-1), Red Cross, and your Neighborhood Association. Also, resources such as your local church, private contractor, neighbor or family member could be of assistance as well.
Odd-Even Parking

The odd/even parking ordinance is used by the City to create enough space for the plows and other City service vehicles to access a street during the winter months. This allows the plows to service the street during snow events and create a lane for driving. Although the City attempts to clear the streets in sync with the parking regulations, the plows may not service both sides of the street during a snow event. The snow plows do attempt to widen streets and clean up in between snow events, weather permitting.

This is a seasonal parking rule that takes place from Nov. 1 – April 1. To avoid being ticketed and subject to a $20 parking fine, please park on the even-numbered side of the street on even numbered days and on the odd-numbered side of the street on odd-numbered days from 1 a.m. to 6 p.m. From 6 p.m. to 1 a.m. the next day, parking is PERMITTED on both sides of the street unless there are signs otherwise restricting parking. BEFORE YOU GO TO BED – THINK AHEAD!

Same Side Parking - Winter Restrictions

With the collaboration of the City’s Traffic Safety Department, Fire Department and Public Services Department, a decision was made to eliminate odd-even parking from Nov. 1 to April 1 on particular streets. The parking has been modified to one-sided parking. Some streets will have no parking at all. This change was made so that City emergency vehicles and snow plows can more easily navigate neighborhoods streets. Notices will go out for residents that are affected, as well as signs installed on the identified streets.

The City of Grand Rapids recognizes this will make it more difficult for residents to clear the snow on the side of the street where parking is allowed. Therefore, the City will do its best to work with residents to assist with snow removal if it becomes necessary.

The Public Services Department will also be coordinating its efforts with neighborhood associations to ensure that plowing is coordinated on residential streets.

For updated information on the streets affected, call 3-1-1 or 616-456-3000. The information is also available at www.grcity.us under the Traffic Safety Department where there is a link to the winter restriction map. The web address is http://grcity.us/enterprise-services/Lights-Signals-and-Signs/Pages/default.aspx.
Volunteer incentive program keeps neighborhoods safe

What is the Adopt-A-Hydrant Program?

Adopt-A-Hydrant is a citizen volunteer program that allows you to get involved in the community and help keep everyone safe by pledging to keep a specific fire hydrant or group of hydrants clear of vegetation and heavy snow and reporting any issues. By adopting a hydrant and shoveling a clearing of 6 ft. circumference around the hydrant, volunteers protect themselves and their neighbors, providing access for firefighters and water system staff during emergencies. Participants earn an adoption certificate and 1,000 mygrcitypoints.

The Adopt-A-Hydrant program is a way to encourage citizens to participate directly in the maintenance of the overall infrastructure and safety of our community. With over 13,000 fire hydrants system-wide, volunteers are a tremendous help in keeping access to those hydrants open through the winter, especially when heavy snow accumulations or snowplows bury the hydrant.

Those interested in enrolling may visit www.grcity.us/adoptahydrant for program information, as well answers to frequently asked questions. Information on the two types of “Adoption” forms can be found on the website. One form is for those who are interested in adopting less than ten hydrants and a separate form for groups and organizations that want to adopt more than ten hydrants.

O Christmas Tree
How to dispose of trees and “un-Deck the Halls”

Free Drop Off Christmas Tree Disposal
Grand Rapids offers free drop-off sites for Christmas trees after the holidays. The sites are located at:
• Riverside Park (north entrance) located at 3151 Monroe Ave NE
• JC Family Park located at 2531 Kalamazoo Ave SE
• Lincoln Park located at 1120 Bridge St NW
• Huff Park located at 2399 Ball Ave NE

The drop-off locations will be open beginning December 28, 2015 to January 29, 2016

Fee-Based Curbside Pickup Program
The alternative method for disposing of your tree is to attached a $2.50 City bulk yard waste tag (purple tag) to the tree and place it in your pickup area by 7 a.m. on the regular refuse collection day.

Bulk yard waste tags may be purchased at City Hall, 300 Monroe Ave NW, in the customer service lobby. City Hall is open Monday through Friday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Some local stores may also have the tags in stock.

Christmas trees that are placed in the refuse pick-up area must be properly tagged for collection. The tag must be visible at the time of collection. Residents should make every effort to be sure that the tree is able to be collected (not buried in the snow) and the tag visible. All ornaments, other decorations, tinsel, nails, tree stands, and any plastic bags on the tree need to be removed prior to collection. If not properly tagged, the property owner is subject to a notice of violation and possible fine. Lost or stolen tags are the responsibility of the resident to replace.
KEEP YOUR PIPES FLOWING
Extreme cold weather tips to avoid frozen pipes

Identify your water main shutoff valve

Know where your main water shut-off is inside your home. Typically, it is located near the meter where the water line enters the building. It is very important to know where this valve is located, because if a pipe bursts anywhere in the house, this valve can turn the water off. Be sure everyone in the family knows where it is and what it does. This will allow you and others to find the valve quickly in an emergency.

Protect your water meter

The water meter is installed by the Grand Rapids Water System. However, it is the property owner’s responsibility to protect the meter from damage. The space where the meter is located must be heated to protect it from freezing. If the meter is frozen or damaged, you will be charged for replacement.

Take extra precautions during extreme cold temperatures

- Pipes located next to an outside wall are most susceptible to freezing temperatures, as are pipes located in a garage or other unheated building. Exposed pipes in these areas should be wrapped or insulated, or alternatively shut off and drained prior to winter.
- Open cupboard doors under sinks, and open pipe chases where possible, especially where plumbing is in an exterior wall, to let interior heat warm the pipes.
- Temporarily keep a steady, but slow drip of cold water at an inside faucet farthest from the meter to keep water moving and less likely to freeze.
- If you’re away for more than a day, shutting off your water and leaving the thermostat at 55 degrees or higher can reduce the chance of broken pipes.

If your water pipes DO freeze...

- NEVER thaw a frozen pipe with a torch or open flame; a hair dryer or the exhaust from a vacuum cleaner is a safer alternative.
- Opening a furnace vent or an inside basement door may also assist in thawing a frozen pipe and getting heat into the basement.
- Do not use electrical appliances in areas of standing water. You could be electrocuted.
- It may be best to contact a licensed plumber to avoid damage when pipes thaw.
- If the lines are frozen, assume they may be broken or split. Purchase repair clamps at a plumbing store or contact a plumber, and be prepared to turn water off when the pipes thaw.
- If there is no water to your home, the problem may be in the street if the water has been shut off to repair a broken water main.