

Winter Briefing Note - November 2015



Introduction

We do everything we can during the winter to minimise delays and accidents caused by ice and snow and to keep traffic moving on the priority roads at all times.

We also provide guidance on how to prepare for and respond to cold weather which can affect everybody's health and wellbeing, and the importance of looking after elderly and vulnerable neighbours, friends and family members during the winter.

Winter 2014/2015

Last winter was slightly more severe than average in comparison with previous years and as a consequence, we used 21,054 tonnes of salt to treat ice on the highways across Lancashire. This is a significant increase to the milder weather we experienced the previous year when we used 11,734 tonnes. As usual, our teams were on standby to carry out precautionary gritting treatments throughout the winter. Our winter fleet was mobilised on 379 occasions last year, compared to 264 occasions the previous year.

Forecasting the weather

Between 1 October and 30 April, the Met Office supplies us with daily weather forecasts and reports. We use this along with the data from our own weather stations to gather information about road surface temperature, air temperature, humidity and an indication of rain, to make a daily decision on whether gritting is necessary.

During winter 2014/15, the weather forecast provided by the Met Office enabled us to make decisions on salt treatment on an individual route basis as opposed to a whole area. This new method, Route Based Forecasting, enabled us to make savings of approximately £232,000 last year.

How we have prepared for winter

Our resources

We stock over 30,000 tonnes of salt and deploy 49 gritters from nine operational depots across the county. We also have the following resources ready to be used in severe weather conditions:

- 15 gritters to provide extra resources to treat secondary routes in severe weather;
- 50 hand gritters to treat footways;
- Towed gritters, snow blowers and snow ploughs;
- 39 farmers/agricultural contractors who have equipment to carry out snow clearing and provide additional support during bad weather when our resources are stretched.

Within each of our gritters is a vehicle tracking system which allows us to keep track of when, where and what gritting activity has been undertaken. We are also introducing satellite navigation and GPS controlled automatic salting systems to some of the fleet this year allowing any driver to drive any route. This allows much more efficient and flexible use of our labour resources, particularly in severe weather situations.

Where we grit

Of the 7,000 kilometres of road we are responsible for, around 41% (2,900 kilometres) are part of our [priority road network](#) for salting and snow clearing during the winter. It's not possible to grit every road in Lancashire due to cost and resources, so we choose the priority roads to keep the county moving. During freezing conditions do not assume a road has been treated and drive with caution, ice could have formed despite our efforts.

We always treat the following roads first as part of our priority road network:

- Non-trunk motorways and A roads – the main routes across the county.
- B roads – other main roads in and out of towns.
- Single routes in and out of villages.

We also aim to treat the second most important roads during periods of continuous ice or snow, in daylight hours and after the higher priority roads have been treated. We've also identified priority footway networks in each of the districts. When we have the resources, we treat these footpaths during periods of continuous ice or snow.

The Highways Agency is responsible for gritting the M6, M55, M58, M61 and M65 to Junction 10, the A56 between the M66 and M65 and the A585 between the M55 and Fleetwood.

Grit bins

We have over 1,800 grit bins and approx. 600 heaps of grit around the county. They are in key locations such as on steep bends and gradients, in villages (often near a school) and where they are most needed. We fill these before the start of winter and refill them as often as we are able to during the winter.



How residents can prepare for winter

We do everything we can to ensure we are well prepared and we are asking residents to take a few small steps to make sure that when severe winter weather strikes you are prepared and able to manage.

Stock up on grit

The salt we provide in grit bins is there to help you make the roads and pavements safer for everyone – it's not for private use. You can stock up on grit for your personal use from a range of DIY stores. It's also useful to have a snow shovel, a torch, batteries, a first aid kit and some appropriate footwear and warm clothes handy.

Get your flu jab

The flu vaccine is offered free of charge on the NHS to people who are at risk to ensure that they are protected against catching flu and developing serious complications. You are eligible to receive a free flu jab if you are aged 65 or over, pregnant, have certain medical conditions, live in a residential or nursing home, or are the main carer for an older or disabled person. A flu nasal spray is also available for children under five, you can find out more about this [here](#).

Pharmacies across Lancashire now offer free flu jabs to people who qualify, often without the need to make an appointment.

Contact your GP or local pharmacy if you think you might qualify for a free flu jab. Find out more on the [NHS website](#).

Financial help to heat your home

There are benefits and sources of advice available to make your home more energy efficient, improve your heating or help with bills. Find out what you might be entitled to by calling 0303 333 1111 or visit www.gov.uk/winter-fuel-payment.

Staying safe and well during the winter

There are practical steps residents can take to support the community when bad weather strikes, whether it's checking on elderly and vulnerable relatives and neighbours; helping to clear snow from pathways; or planning ahead for journeys.

Clearing snow and ice yourself

There is no law about clearing snow and ice on the pavement outside your property or public spaces. It is very unlikely an individual would face any legal liability as long as the pavement or pathway isn't more dangerous than before. Make sure you wear suitable footwear in the ice and snow, and wrap up well to keep yourself warm. Find more information about [the snow code here](#).

Travelling safely during the winter



Always check the weather forecast before you set off and leave extra time for your journey during the winter. Be aware that winter weather can be changeable and driving conditions can deteriorate very quickly. Check the traffic and travel advice at [Traffic England](#). When driving in icy or snowy weather, remember to drive with care. Be prepared for the road conditions to change over relatively short distances. Icy stretches can suddenly develop on treated and untreated surfaces caused by water run-off from fields or from springs coming up from the road. These can particularly be dangerous for motorcyclists and cyclists. You can find more tips and advice for safer driving and preparing your vehicle at www.lancashire.gov.uk/winter.

Parking your vehicle during winter

If you park your car on a main road or gritting route during winter, please make sure it's not causing an obstruction. Blocked roads could mean we are unable to grit that road and could also mean your vehicle is at risk of damage if our gritters have to manoeuvre around your vehicle.

Keeping warm and well



Cold homes have a significant impact on people's health. One of the best ways of keeping yourself well during winter is to stay warm. [Visit our website](#) for advice on how to keep warm and well during the winter.

Choose well

There are a range of places you can go for NHS treatment and making the right choice will ensure you get the right care, as soon as possible.

During the winter, A&E departments are under a lot of pressure. Don't go to A&E unless you have an emergency, if you are in any doubt call 111 for help and advice to get the right treatment. A&E and 999 calls should only be used for life-threatening and emergency conditions only, such as heart attacks, strokes and serious injuries.

There are many different ways that you can get the right treatment:

- **Self-care** – For minor illnesses and injuries, look after yourself at home with a well-stocked medicine cabinet.
- **Pharmacists** – If you are suffering from a common winter health problem that doesn't require a doctor, visit your local pharmacy for expert advice on common illnesses and the best medicines to treat them.



- **Doctors (GPs)** – If you have an illness or injury that will not go away make an appointment with your doctor. If you are prescribed medicines by your doctor take them as directed, if you have been given antibiotics make sure that you finish the course.
- **Walk in centres** – Visit your local walk in centre for minor injuries and illnesses. They are open to anyone and you don't need an appointment.
- **NHS 111** – Call this number if you are in any doubt, they can help you to get the right treatment.
- **A&E or 999** – Should only be used in a critical or life-threatening situation. Only call 999 or visit A&E if you need urgent medical attention.

Choosing well ensures you get the treatment you need in the shortest possible time, reducing the pressure on essential NHS services.

Caring for small children

If your child starts to feel ill, first of all get help and advice for treating cold and flu symptoms from your local pharmacy. Don't go to A&E unless you have an emergency, if you are in any doubt call 111 for help and advice to get the right treatment for your child.

Looking after elderly and vulnerable people



Look after yourself and keep an eye on friends, relatives and older neighbours who may be more vulnerable to the cold weather, especially if they suffer from any ongoing medical conditions. Make sure that they are safe, warm and well and have a supply of medicines to help them manage common minor ailments and

enough food if the weather is severe. Get their repeat prescriptions filled in advance during severe weather and be aware that many surgeries and pharmacies will close over the Christmas and New Year period.

If they do start to feel unwell encourage them to get help and advice from their pharmacy straightaway. If you are in any doubt about the seriousness of their condition call 111 for help and advice to get the right treatment for them.

Support for businesses

Following significant snowfall in 2010, we gave permission for some businesses to use, at their own expense, an approved contractor to clear snow from roads the company needed to use that were not on the county council's priority or secondary networks. We continue to offer such local arrangements with businesses with special access requirements, provided agreement can be reached on the details of how this will work.

Further information

We will keep you updated throughout the winter when we are out gritting and with any severe weather advice or school closures:

- On our website www.lancashire.gov.uk/winter
- Follow us on Twitter www.twitter.com/lancashirecc
- Facebook www.facebook.com/lancashirecc - search for #lancswinter.

We will also issue regular winter bulletins to keep you updated on the weather forecast and gritting activity during severe weather.

If you have any queries please contact the customer service centre on **0300 123 6780** or email highways@lancashire.gov.uk.

