

# PUBLIC WORKS



## Pipeline

EARLY 2021

### Clear Plastic Bags Return to Protect Hydrants on High-Traffic Roads

By Dan Reisig

The City of Edina's Public Works Department has once again taken protective measures by covering fire hydrants with clear plastic bags. The coverings were placed on higher-trafficked County and State-aid roads to preserve the life and function of the hydrants.

(continued on Page 3)

[EdinaMN.gov/  
Adopt-a-Hydrant](http://EdinaMN.gov/Adopt-a-Hydrant)



### Do Your Part to Keep Streets Clear of Snow, Follow Winter Parking Rules

By Kaitlin Gault

As snow begins to fall, Edinans' first thought might be to get on the ice or cozy up to watch their favorite movie. Edina Public Works wants residents to notice when it starts snowing and think of where their car is parked so they can keep streets clear of ice and snow.

To help ensure there are no cars blocking parts of the road, the City has winter parking laws. From Nov. 1 through March 31, all vehicles must be off the streets between 1 and 6 a.m. In addition, no vehicle may be parked on any street after a snowfall of at least 1.5 inches until the street has been plowed its full width.

(continued on Page 7)

**About 57 inches of snow falls in Edina in an average year!**





# Protect Your Mailbox From Harsh Winters

By Dan Reisig

The mail is delivered in all weather conditions, so it's important for residents to keep a safe space for mail delivery and packages.

As winter bears down on Minnesota, now is a great time to ensure that your mailbox is properly maintained and ready for winter's effects. Plows can create wakes that can damage a weak mailbox post. A quick inspection may prevent damage or destruction of your mailbox.

**Make your steps and walkways safe by clearing off snow and ice.**

Residents should check posts for rot near the ground, where moisture from ground dew and irrigation can play havoc

with the wood. Additionally, check the stability of the box, ensuring all four corners are secured and able to handle a small impact from a snow wake.

When a direct impact from a snowplow takes out a mailbox, the City will replace and/or reimburse the homeowner up to \$100. Reports of downed mailboxes are evaluated quickly and on a case-by-case basis. The best way to report a downed

mailbox is through the City's app, Edina 311. Select the "Damaged Mailbox" category and enter all the details of the incident, including the address at which it occurred. The request will then be sent to Public Works where a staff member will address your concern. Residents may also call Public Works to report mailbox damage at 952-826-0376.

Snowplow drivers slow down when they come to a mailbox to make sure the snow doesn't cast up over the mailbox and knock it down. However, since their speed decreases, a little snow is left out in front of the mailbox. This small pile is the homeowner's responsibility to clear for the mail carriers to have easy access to your mailbox.

"In some cases, you may be receiving mail at your doorstep by a postal worker on foot," explained Streets Supervisor John Scheerer. "We ask that you make your steps and walkways safe by clearing off snow and ice. This will help prevent any personal injury to a postal worker who has a demanding job on snow days."

*For more information about mailbox maintenance recommendations, email Scheerer at [jscheerer@EdinaMN.gov](mailto:jscheerer@EdinaMN.gov).*

# Frequently Asked Questions

## ***What is the hardness of Edina water, and what level of hardness should I set my water softener to?***

Edina water averages 18 grains of hardness. The Utilities Division recommends setting your softener to soften the water to 3 or 4 grains of hardness.

## ***I'm having problems with sewage backing up into my basement. What do I do?***

Call the City of Edina first – any time, day or night. The number for the Utilities Division is 952-826-0375, 7 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. After hours, weekends and holidays, call the Police Department's non-emergency number, 952-826-1610.

If the problem is not in the City main, you will be given information about what steps to take next. Calling the City first can save you time and money, as we do not charge for this service!

## ***What causes my drain to run so slowly or back up? What can I do?***

If it is running slowly, there is a partial block somewhere in the line that you need to have opened. If the drain backs up only while you're using water, then slowly drains away, you have a block in your sewer service line. If the water backs up into your home even though you're not using any water, it is probably a plug in the City's main sewer line. If you have any questions, call the Utilities Division at 952-826-0375 and we will

help you. If it is after hours or on a weekend or holiday, call Police non-emergency at 952-826-1610.

## ***Is "biodegradable" material "flushable" material?***

There are only three things that should be flushed down a toilet. These are toilet paper, urine and feces. When grease; paper towels; wipes of any kind, including those labeled "disposable" or "flushable" rags; diapers or other "sanitary" items are flushed, they create clogs, which in turn cause sewer backups.

– Compiled by Susan Waack

## **Clear Plastic Bags Return to Protect Hydrants (continued from front page)**

"Unlike residential streets where the traffic is slower and less frequent, the busier roads where we cover hydrants are subject to mist and spray from salt and other chemicals," said Utilities Supervisor Nathan Kaderlik. "By covering the hydrants, we're able to help protect them from damage accelerated by the salt and heavy snow plowing."

Nearly 10 percent of the City's 2,000 hydrants have been covered by the plastic bags, which cost Public Works roughly \$100 each year. In comparison, replacing a hydrant costs more than \$4,000.

The hydrants will be covered until April. Clear plastic bags indicate that the hydrant is being protected, as opposed

to the orange bags that indicate an out-of-service hydrant scheduled for repair or replacement. If a covered hydrant is used by the Fire Department during the winter, Public Works is notified and replaces the bag.

"Minimal investment in time and money up front has the potential for great savings down the road," Kaderlik added.

Residents are also reminded of the need to keep hydrants clear and visible. Buried hydrants cause dangerous delays for firefighters. The City's Adopt-a-Hydrant program allows residents to claim responsibility for shoveling out fire hydrants after heavy snowfall and making sure the hydrants are clear of brush.

To keep a hydrant clear:

- remove all snow and ice in a 3-foot radius around the hydrant
- make sure the hydrant is visible from the street
- remove any plants or debris within a 3-foot radius

"Residents should really make sure the area around the hydrant is clear of any planting or brush, as that causes issues in doing any maintenance and can cause delays if there is a fire," Kaderlik explained.

*For more information about hydrant coverings, contact Public Works at 952-826-0376. To learn more about the Adopt-a-Hydrant program, visit [EdinaMN.gov/AdoptaHydrant](http://EdinaMN.gov/AdoptaHydrant).*

# Edina Takes Advantage of New Methods to Cut Salt Use

## Residents and Businesses Can Help Reduce Chloride Pollution

By Debbie Townsend



Edina's new salt brine truck

Salt is great for dealing with Minnesota winters.

Except that it harms ponds, lakes and streams, along with the plants, fish and animals that rely on them. Not to mention it rusts cars and seeps into our water system.

In recent years, Edina has been among the leaders in shifting to smarter salting – and using far less of it – by taking advantage of science and technology.

Streets Supervisor Shawn Anderson is excited about the City's new, specialized salt brine truck. It may not sound thrilling, but it will allow quickly pre-treating streets in advance of snow. It requires less of troublesome chloride yet is far more effective than traditional salting because it prevents ice from bonding to the street. After it snows, often a single pass with a plow will leave the pavement bare and dry.

"With that truck, we hope to implement better chemical anti-icing across the city," Anderson said. "There are times it will help tremendously."

**Edina has been among the leaders in shifting to smarter salting – and using far less of it – by taking advantage of science and technology.**



Other recent changes include outfitting plows with articulated blades that better scrape the road surface to more effectively remove snow.

*For more information on Smart Salting, a list of certified contractors, upcoming trainings and helpful resources, visit [pca.state.mn.us/water/smart-salting-training](http://pca.state.mn.us/water/smart-salting-training). Reach Anderson at [sanderson@EdinaMN.gov](mailto:sanderson@EdinaMN.gov) or Wilson at [jwilson@EdinaMN.gov](mailto:jwilson@EdinaMN.gov).*

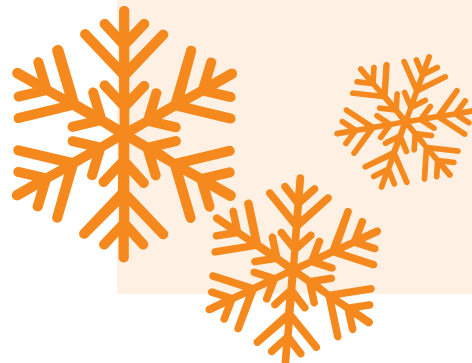
Photo by Glenn Gray

## What You Can Do as a Resident

- Don't salt in temperatures below 15 degrees – it's ineffective.
- Use salt sparingly. Don't pour from the container. Spread it by hand, leaving 3 inches between each granule.
- Sweep up any salt left after ice melts. "If it crunches under your feet or leaves a white film, that's way too much," said Water Resources Coordinator Jessica Wilson. "If you can sweep it up after the ice is gone, you used too much."

## What Businesses Can Do

- Monitor use. Half a coffee cup of salt easily covers the average parking space.
- Hire a Smart Salting-certified contractor or have an employee take the free training.
- Consider a responsible salting contract with your snow removal company. Find a model contract at [EdinaMN.gov/PollutionPrevention](http://EdinaMN.gov/PollutionPrevention).



# Snow Forts Create Danger for Children and Plow Drivers



**By Kaitlin Gault**

Like catching snowflakes on your tongue, sledding or tubing, building and playing inside a snow fort may seem like a safe winter activity. When you dig a little deeper, snow forts are a danger during plowing months, according to Edina Public Works.

During snowy months, City plows create snowbanks next to the street that become very tall and tempting for families to use to create snow forts. A snow fort is constructed from a pile of snow, and often contains a roof and a tunnel that serves as the “opening.” Unlike an igloo, snow forts are made with very heavy snow and are not structurally sound.

“It is really dangerous to make a snow fort on the edge of the street or within eight feet of the road,” said Streets Supervisor John Scheerer. “A snow fort in these areas can be taken out by a plow or a car sliding on ice.”

A snow fort with a roof and tunnel are particularly unsafe. Tunneling weakens the

snow and increases the likelihood for the roof to collapse due to the uneven weight distribution. The roof can also muffle cries for help if a child becomes trapped inside.

Snow forts are hard to spot. The opening usually faces the yard or driveway – something a plow driver cannot see.

“A plow driver coming down the road only sees the snowbank, not your snow fort,” Scheerer said. “If they can’t see the opening, they don’t know it’s there or that someone may be inside.”

Scheerer also said snow fort danger exists even when it is not snowing.

“After a storm, it is common for plows to clean up and detail routes,” he said. “During a heavy snow year with significant snow depth and minimal melting, plows may also return to push the snow beyond the gutter line to make additional storage for the next round of snow.”

If a plow driver sees a snow fort near the road, they will push it back into the yard or destroy it after ensuring no one is

inside. They also attempt to contact the homeowner to provide education.

“We recognize children want to have fun when it snows and we want them to, but in the safest way,” said Scheerer. “We have to do everything we can to keep everyone safe, but also accomplish our job.”

Scheerer recommends a Minnesota Department of Transportation video on winter safety to parents and children ages 4-12. Although it hasn’t happened this year due to COVID-19, Scheerer and Public Works Administrative Assistant Susan Waack typically show the video to kindergarten classes throughout the winter. The video is available at [EdinaMN.gov/SnowPlowing](http://EdinaMN.gov/SnowPlowing).

The next time it snows, use the piles for building snowmen and help Public Works keep streets clear of snow while keeping families safe.

*For more information about the City’s plowing or winter safety, visit [EdinaMN.gov/PublicWorks](http://EdinaMN.gov/PublicWorks).*



**(continued from front page)**

Streets Supervisor Shawn Anderson says Public Works crews try to clear ice and snow as fast as they can during a storm.

“We try to work quickly from curb to curb so when residents start their day, they can move around safely without having to worry about unplowed streets,” he said. “With no vehicles parked on the street, we can plow a lot faster.”

Other than speed, safety is a motivator to keep cars off the street.

“When a crew member has to work around a parked vehicle, it gets dangerous and makes an accident to our equipment or a vehicle more likely,” said Anderson. “When we are forced to plow around a car, it leaves a big snow windrow in the street that hardens and freezes up if we’re not able to get back to clear it. It’s not easy to clean up where cars were parked, so this can become an unsafe nuisance in the street.”

Edina Police Chief Dave Nelson said police do their best to assist Public Works in keeping the streets clear of parked vehicles so they can achieve their goal of providing the best snow plowing service to residents.

“From November through March, officers are out enforcing overnight parking restrictions to educate people and keep

**‘With no vehicles parked on the street, we can plow a lot faster.’**

**– Streets Supervisor Shawn Anderson**

the streets clear prior to plowable snow events,” said Nelson. “First-time offenders are educated with an informational warning card and repeat violators may be issued a citation. We try to avoid having to tow vehicles when we can, but sometimes it’s necessary.”

Public Works Streets Supervisor John Scheerer says having vehicles off the streets is why they are able to do as good of a job as they do for the 25 plow routes.

Anderson said some residents think they can leave their vehicles on the street if they don’t live on a major road. That’s a common misunderstanding.

“While major roadways may have more volume than residential streets like a cul-de-sac, it doesn’t matter because if we are to plow curb to curb, we need cars gone so we can do our jobs well,” he said. “Plowing around a vehicle parked in a cul-de-sac requires Public Works to come back to clean up the snow buildup later.”

In an average year, the snowfall in Edina is about 57 inches. Scheerer said, “We had around 17 inches in November – the second snowiest on record, and I’ve been here 35 years.”

When you notice the snow begin to fall this winter, stop to think of where your car is parked before settling into your big, comfy couch.

*For more information on winter parking ordinances or the City’s plowing efforts, visit [EdinaMN.gov/snowplowing](http://EdinaMN.gov/snowplowing) or contact the Edina Police Department at 952-826-1610 or Anderson at 952-826-0313.*

# PUBLIC WORKS

## Pipeline

City of Edina  
4801 West 50th Street  
Edina, MN 55424  
EdinaMN.gov

\*\*\*ECRWSS\*\*\*  
POSTAL PATRON  
CAR-RT-WS

PRESORT STD  
U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
TWIN CITIES MN  
Permit No. 3932

## Thousands of Snow Stakes Help Guide Plow Drivers

By Debbie Townsend

They arrive every fall, a clear sign winter is coming soon.

Public Works installs about 4,000 snow stakes across the city to help guide the snowplows and mark where the street ends and yards begin. Ideally they are installed after Halloween – so trick-or-treaters don't run into them in the dark – but before the ground freezes or major snowfalls arrive. Mother Nature doesn't always cooperate, though.

City staff used to install more than 6,000 metal stakes annually, but as streets are reconstructed with curb and gutter additions, stakes are no longer needed in those areas. The plow driver can use the curblines as a guide, said Streets Supervisor John Scheerer.

Of the 25 street plow routes in Edina, only about a third need any snow stakes, with most of those on the west side of town.

The east half has more new curb and gutter to guide plows.

Plow drivers install the stakes in their own routes, using a truck with hydraulics to push them deep into the ground. Most often, stakes are put in 10-12 inches behind the curb.

"Drivers place them along their route in the locations that best work for them," Scheerer said. "The snow stakes are there to help guide the plow drivers down the road. They do not totally eliminate sod damage, but they help minimize it."

If a plow damages your grass, report it right away, Scheerer said. If weather permits, crews will come out and make repairs instead of waiting until spring.

Occasionally a plow will hit a stake or a car will slide off the road into one and snap it off. This can leave a dangerous sharp point



sticking up from the ground and should be reported so Public Works can fix the issue. Other issues include a stake piercing an irrigation line.

Come spring, snow stake removal is still done the old-fashioned way – by hand – once the threat of big snow has mostly passed and the ground is warm enough to pull them.

*Report any plow-related issues on the Edina 311 app, online at EdinaMN.gov/Edina311 or by calling Public Works at 952-826-0376.*