

Township of
Langley



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NEWS RELEASE

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TOWNSHIP OF LANGLEY COPES WITH SEVERE WINTER CONDITIONS

It has been several years since the Lower Mainland experienced a significant snowfall, and when the snow did arrive this winter, it brought with it freezing temperatures that have made for abnormally icy and difficult conditions.

“These are very unusual circumstances, not something that happens every year,” said Ramin Seifi, the Township of Langley’s General Manager of Engineering and Community Development. “The combination of heavy snowfall and below zero temperatures have created conditions we don’t normally experience here on the west coast. Based on historic data from Environment Canada, the region experienced about twice the amount of average snowfall, with about five degrees of colder weather than the average, going back to 1961.”

Since the snow first started falling in December, the Township has utilized all its available resources and had all crews working around the clock to maintain roads, following established protocols based on Council-approved policy that ensures major routes get cleared first and are maintained for most users for the duration of the snow event.

With over 900 kilometres of roadway, priorities are assigned based on the type of street and the volume of traffic.

First priority roads are major collector and main arterial roads used by a large number of drivers, as well as school zones, bus routes, and hilly areas. They are serviced 24 hours a day, seven days a week, as long as poor conditions remain.

Second priorities are made up of industrial and commercial roads and secondary residential through-roads providing connection between arterial and major collector roads. These routes are serviced once conditions on first priority routes are determined to be under control. If conditions deteriorate on first priority routes, resources are redirected back to them.

The remaining local roads are third priority and are cleared last. Service is based on conditions, and if snow exceeds 10 inches at the centre line of the road, a snow plow may make a single pass.

“Normally it snows, then it rains or warms up to wash it away or melt it, but this year temperatures dropped and the snow is freezing,” said Roeland Zwaag, the Township’s Director of Public Works. “Crews have been out in full force since the holidays, using salt, brine, sand, and snow plows, and utilizing all available equipment.”

The Township’s winter fleet is made up of nine large dump trucks for salting and sanding, two large brine trucks, eight small brine trucks, and three small salt and sander trucks, all of which are equipped with plows. Brine – an anti-icing solution of salt mixed with water – is applied to bare roads before snow falls to prevent them from freezing. Brine helps the salt supply go further, and so far, the Township’s winter maintenance efforts have used up approximately 4,500 tonnes of salt and 1.8 million litres of brine.

Salt is applied after snow begins falling to address black ice and slippery conditions, and while the Township has more salt on order, it is in high demand, as the entire region is facing the same icy conditions. On roads that are already covered in snow or ice, salt is being mixed with sand and applied to create traction, Zwaag said.

The Township spent over \$1.1 million for snow removal in 2016 and is still incurring significant costs. The Township’s annual budget for winter maintenance is approximately \$800,000, and that amount was requested for snow removal in the 2017 budget.

With so many people feeling the effect of such unusual weather conditions, residents are encouraged to get to know their neighbours and work together to help elderly members of the community, those with challenges including limited mobility, and others who may find it difficult to cope in these conditions. Volunteering to help clear snow from the sidewalks and walkways of those unable to do it themselves enhances safety for everyone, helps develop neighbourhood connections, and is greatly appreciated.

“With more severe winter weather expected, everyone needs to be prepared. Use caution, keep an eye out for one another, and help keep our community safe during these harsh winter conditions,” Seifi said.

The Langley RCMP is also reminding drivers and pedestrians to be careful and aware when they are out and about.

“Since we are likely to ‘enjoy’ the winter weather for a little bit longer, it is a good time to reinforce our good driving habits,” said Langley RCMP Media Relations Officer, Cpl. Holly Lardy. “Four-wheel drive vehicles and snow tires are definitely helpful for driving in the snow, but remember - they don’t stop any faster. Make sure you give yourself plenty of time and be aware that there may be ice under a fresh skiff of snow.”

“Drivers and pedestrians need to be hyper vigilant and mindful of each other,” she added. “Head's up everyone: make sure you can see 'the other guy' and make sure 'the other guy' sees you. Consider wearing your brightest and loudest outerwear when walking in the Winter Wonderland - get visible!”

Residents can visit tol.ca/stormresponse for information on the Township's Snow and Ice Control Program, winter maintenance routes, updates on garbage and recycling service delays, and a Seniors Winter Guide. The Township also offers a Storm Response Information Hotline at 604.514.HELP (4357), which provides a voice-recorded update during extreme weather events.

For the latest updates on service levels, follow the Township of Langley on Facebook and Twitter (@LangleyTownship).