



*A Publication of the Charlevoix County Road Commission*

## A Day With a Snowplow Driver

By Randy Thompson, Road Foreman

### Frequently asked questions

♦ **Why is my road the last one plowed after a snowstorm?**

— *The Road Commission plows the main roads first and local roads second. Subdivision streets and short dead end roads are third priority. The order of plowing reflects road usage: the higher traffic volumes establish the priority.*

*Although our crews may begin snow removal several hours before the morning peak traffic, and continue operations into the night, extended winter storms or continuing winds may require crews to continually plow the main roads and prevent them from reaching secondary roads.*

One of the most important services the Road Commission provides Charlevoix County motorists is keeping the roads clear and passable during winter.

This winter has been a little more like the "old fashion" winters of a few years ago where snow came early and needed cleanup nearly every day.

Since the beginning of deer season last November, our trucks and men have been out plowing almost every day, some storms require our employees to work 12 hours a day 7 days a week.

A typical day for a snowplow driver starts with an early morning phone call from the road foreman due to another snowy blast.

...He packs a lunch and makes coffee. The first thing he does at work is a vehicle inspection to assure his truck is safe and ready for a full day of plowing. If the truck is equipped with a sander he loads it with salt or a mix of salt and sand. He drives to his assigned route and begins to clear the roads of snow, and spreads anti-icing materials if needed.

Some of the hazards a

driver may encounter during the day are stranded motorists, abandoned vehicles, pedestrians, and snowmobiles, to name a few. He has to stay alert to these dangers and still stay focused on his job of snow removal.

On days when it is snowing hard or the wind is blowing, he knows he is going to be working long hours. There are times when visibility is next to nothing. He knows the motoring public, can count on him to make the roads safe.

During heavy snows

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Old State Road, Melrose Township

## Weight restrictions will be implemented countywide March 9, 2009

Please visit our page on the Charlevoix County Website to see the list of Weight Restricted Charlevoix County Roads.

[www.Charlevoixcounty.org/ccrc.asp](http://www.Charlevoixcounty.org/ccrc.asp)

## A Day With a Snowplow Driver

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his work will be covered up in a short time, and he has to start all over again

Clearing snow from intersections involves backing up several times. Drivers have virtually no visibility directly

behind their trucks, so they must depend on the public being alert to their back up lights and warning alarm.

Our snowplow drivers have a challenging job, but when the day is over, they know they have done their best.

## Safe Travel Around Snowplows

- ◆ Stay back...at least 15 car lengths (200-feet). Snowplow trucks turn frequently, stop or take evasive action to avoid stranded vehicles.
- ◆ React defensively. Pay attention to a snowplow trucks warning lights and back up alarm. A snowplow operator's field of vision is restricted, especially when backing up. Though you see them, don't assume they see you.
- ◆ Don't crowd the plow. Snowplows reach far and wide. The front plow extends several feet in front of the truck and may cross the centerline when turning and cleaning intersections.
- ◆ Avoid passing. You will put yourself and all those around you in danger.
- ◆ Drive smart. Front plows and underbody blades can throw up a cloud of snow that may reduce your visibility to zero in less time than you can react. Be aware of what's coming at you.



Old State Road, Melrose Township

## Winter Driving Safety Tips

Driving in the winter means snow, sleet and ice that can lead to slower traffic, hazardous road conditions, unforeseen dangers and road rage. The best advice for driving in bad winter weather is not to drive at all, if you can avoid it.

### Driving safely on icy roads

1. Decrease your speed and leave yourself plenty of room to stop. You should allow at least three times more space than usual between you and the car in front of you.
2. Brake gently to avoid skidding. If your wheels start to lock up, ease off the brake, if you are driving an older vehicle without ABS brakes, or rapidly apply and release the brake pedal to improve braking action. If your vehicle

has ABS, the ABS computer will select the optimum braking action while you depress and hold the pedal.

3. Turn on your lights to increase your visibility to other motorists.
4. Keep your lights and windshield clean.
5. Use low gears for traction, especially on hills.
6. Don't use cruise control or overdrive on icy roads.
7. Be especially careful on bridges, overpasses and infrequently traveled roads, which will freeze first. Even at temperatures above freezing, if the conditions are wet, you might encounter ice in shady areas or on exposed roadways like bridges.
8. Don't pass snow plows and sanding trucks. The drivers have limited visibility, and you're likely to find the road in

front of them worse than the road behind.

9. Don't assume your vehicle can handle all conditions. Even four-wheel and front-wheel drive vehicles can encounter trouble on winter roads.

### If your rear wheels skid

1. Take your foot off the accelerator.
2. Steer in the direction you want the front wheels to go. If your rear wheels are sliding left, steer left. If they're sliding right, steer right.
3. If your rear wheels start sliding the other way as you recover, ease the steering wheel toward that side. You might have to steer left and right a few times to get your vehicle completely under control.

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## Employee Anniversaries

*This winter Randy Thompson celebrates his 34<sup>th</sup> anniversary with CCRC !*



### Winter Driving Safety Tips

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4. If you have standard brakes, pump them gently.
5. If you have anti-lock brakes (ABS), do not pump the brakes. Apply steady pressure to the brakes. You will feel the brakes pulse – this is normal.

#### If your front wheels skid

1. Take your foot off the gas and shift to neutral, but don't try to steer immediately.
2. As the wheels skid sideways, they will slow the vehicle and traction will return. As it does, steer in the direction

you want to go. Then put the transmission in "drive" or release the clutch, and accelerate gently.

#### If you get stuck

1. Do not spin your wheels. This will only dig your vehicle in deeper.
2. Turn your wheels from side to side a few times to push snow out of the way.
3. Use a light touch on the gas, to ease your car out.
4. Use a shovel to clear snow away from the wheels and the underside of the

- car.
5. Pour sand, kitty litter, gravel or salt in the path of the wheels to help with traction.
6. Try rocking the vehicle. (Check your owner's manual first – it can damage the transmission on some vehicles.) Shift from forward to reverse, and back again. Each time you're in gear, give a light touch on the gas until the vehicle moves.

Sources: National Safety Council

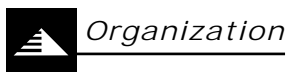
### Picture Gallery

On the right –Charlevoix County Road Commission's newest grader, a 2009 VOLVO G940 with snow wing. It replaces a 2003 CATERPILLAR 140H grader covered by a guaranteed buy-back program.



Photos below were taken in Charlevoix County in 1939. Does the winter of 1939 remind you of this winter of 2008-2009?





## **CHARLEVOIX COUNTY ROAD COMMISSION**

### **Main Office**

Boyne City Garage  
P.O. Box 39  
1251 Boyne Avenue,  
Boyne City, MI 49712  
Phone: (231) 582-7330  
Fax: (231) 582-3110

*Please visit our page on the Charlevoix County Website  
for information such as: meeting schedules, Board minutes,  
permit applications, etc.*

### **Ironton Garage**

11705 Shaw Road  
Charlevoix, MI 49720  
Phone: (231) 547-2551



### **Beaver Island Garage**

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Beaver Island, MI 49782  
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## **How to Contact Us**

### **Office Hours**

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The Charlevoix County Road Commission Main Office and Boyne City maintenance garage is located on M-75 just east of the Boyne City Public School football field.