

# Snow Removal FAQs (2024)

To help assist residents with snow removal questions, the Board and Management have prepared the following Frequently Asked Questions. Please contact the HOA office if you have further questions. A list of streets and ownership can be found online at [broadlandshoa.org](http://broadlandshoa.org) by clicking on the snowplow link.

## 1. Why are some roads plowed by VDOT and some by the HOA?

The HOA owns and maintains some roads (85 to be exact) within Broadlands, but many roads are public. The public roads belong to the county and are plowed by VDOT. Taxes pay for VDOT to plow, so residents living on public roads need to contact VDOT directly if they feel they are not receiving adequate service. Residents living on private HOA-owned streets pay an additional assessment to the HOA to fund private road maintenance, which includes snow and ice services. Residents on VDOT streets do not pay the HOA the additional assessments for private road maintenance.

## 2. Can VDOT plow the HOA-owned road?

The HOA would gladly turn all the private roads over to them. Unfortunately, the county has very specific requirements for roads – such as minimum widths – and VDOT will not accept roads that do not meet their requirements. The HOA does not choose which roads it owns. This is determined when the developer submits the plan to the county - long before construction ever began.

## 3. Why are some streets plowed sooner than others?

The crews are assigned maps by their leader. They work on their assigned streets until they are done. With 85 private streets, some roads will be treated first, and some will be done last because the plows cannot be on every street at the same time. The crews normally address the main roads first and then work on the secondary roads. You might see a plow drive past your street without stopping. They may be assigned somewhere else, there may be a vehicle blocking access, too many vehicles parked in the way to get the equipment in safely, or there may be too much snow for their equipment to handle. In blizzard-type storms, snow drifts present additional challenges - previously cleared roads can become snow-covered again, pulling crews back for additional passes. Whatever the reason, crews will work to clear your road as quickly and safely as possible.

## 4. Why don't the plows clear the road down to bare pavement?

Vehicles driving on snow compact it down, making it more difficult for the plow blade to clear the surface to the pavement – one reason the government, media, and HOA encourage residents to stay home and off the streets during inclement weather. The HOA does not generally use chemicals in subdivisions. Residents should expect streets to have some compacted snow and ice for a few days until temperatures and sunshine allow for melting. Crews will treat certain areas with ice-melt e.g. certain hills and intersections, curved roadways, etc. where additional traction is needed to allow safe passage, but thaw/freeze cycles may cause these areas to become covered again. Keep in mind that high winds may cause drifting in some areas - a street may have been plowed only to later be covered again by blowing snow. It can also be difficult for plow blades to scrape down to black pavement, depending on the current conditions (how dry/wet the snow is, how fast it is coming down, how hard the wind is blowing, etc.)

## 5. Why don't the plows clear the entire width of the street, from curb to curb?

Plows are often a misunderstood piece of equipment. If you've ever driven a full-sized pickup on a crowded street like many of the ones in our community, which can be a challenge on its own, consider what it's like to add a plow blade sticking 4 feet out in front of your vehicle. Even a "small" plow truck can be more than 22' long. Operating a large vehicle, manipulating a plow blade from side to side and up and down, and frequently shifting gears is challenging. Plow blades can push snow off to the side, but they cannot pick it up. When significant accumulation occurs, the drivers will do everything possible to clear the widest lanes, but they may not be curb to curb. Bear in mind that these trucks can slide on ice- and snow-covered roads too, so plow drivers exercise extreme caution near parked vehicles, causing owners to have to shovel more to get vehicles out to the road. The contractor widens the roads as much as reasonably possible, but in some of the densely

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populated areas, there is nowhere to push the snow during extremely high snowfall events. Please park your vehicles off the roads and off to the sides of parking lots whenever possible. Abandoned vehicles can also add to the issue.

## 6. *Why can't we use reserves to pay the snow removal bills?*

Reserve funds are required to be held for future repairs and replacements of community property and cannot be used for snow removal. Those funds are on hold in reserve to pay for major expenses such as resurfacing HOA roads, re-roofing the community center, or replacing pool machinery, not for operating expenses.

## 7. *Why are the fees for HOA-owned streets higher than for residents on VDOT streets? How much of the monthly assessment goes to snow plowing?*

For 2024, the budget for snow removal for townhomes and Demott & Silver Condos is \$60,000. That's \$42.96 per unit per year (or \$3.58 per month). The budget for snow removal for single-family homes on private streets (SFPS) is \$18,651. That's \$49.60 per home per year (or \$4.13 per month). The balance of the monthly assessment is for private road maintenance for the repair and repaving of those roads, aprons, curb and gutter, and sidewalks.

## 8. *Why don't we budget more for snow removal and increase service?*

It's impossible to predict the weather months (or even days) in advance, and snow is a huge variable from year to year. When formulating the budget, the Board uses an average cost of snow removal for past years. Inflated amounts can lead to unnecessary increases in assessments or a surplus of income in the budget. The Association is required to maintain a balanced budget. The Board makes every effort to keep assessments stable while keeping services as high as possible.

## 9. *How does our snow contract work?*

The Association's contract is "time and materials" and is at a fair and reasonable cost for these services in our area. Each snow event is different and unpredictable, but we are billed only for the time the contractor worked. The Association is fortunate to have a contractor who is solely dedicated to Broadlands and willing to work around the clock. Many associations have crews that are assigned to multiple properties, and their community may not be a priority for that contractor. If you've ever driven down Demott Drive, you've probably seen some of the equipment stored in the Summerbrooke pool parking lot. All equipment is stored on site all winter and is dedicated to Broadlands. Additional equipment that is utilized by the contractor for other jobs year-round is brought for snow events to fully support our needs.

## 10. *How do we know we are receiving the best and most qualified plowing service?*

Signature Snow and Ice Control (SSIC) has been providing snow plowing services in Broadlands for 20 years. Their rates are extremely competitive, and they are familiar with the most efficient and productive ways to plow our streets. They routinely provide Broadlands with several plow trucks, a tractor, and crews dedicated to clearing our roads and sidewalks as quickly as possible. Additional equipment is brought in as conditions warrant.

## 11. *Do crews take breaks? How long do they work between breaks?*

Many of the drivers work long hours during winter weather events - often 24 to 36 hours at a time without the opportunity to go home and sleep in a real bed. The goal during heavy storms is for each driver to have a 6-hour break every 24 hours. Sometimes they need breaks more often to nap, eat, use the restroom, or touch base with loved ones. It's understandable and recommended that they take a break occasionally to re-energize and safely continue their work. They work both day and night, driving slippery roads, dodging parked cars, and avoiding hazards to clear the roads. All so that emergency responders can reach residents in the event of a life-threatening emergency.

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## ***12. Can the plows push the snow in such a way as to avoid blocking my driveway?***

A plow blade is designed to push snow to the side; it will not pick it up and deposit it elsewhere. As the plow moves along the road, snow is piled up along the side whether that side has a curb, a driveway, or a guardrail. To clear a lane quickly, the plows will push snow off to the sides. It can be very frustrating to dig out the driveway only to have the plow leave a new pile. VDOT recommends digging out an area 10 to 15 feet to the right of your driveway (viewed from the street), giving the excess snow a place to go, which may help minimize the plow pile at the end of your driveway. This is difficult to do in some of the densely populated areas where driveways are side by side.

## ***13. Who is responsible for clearing around the fire hydrants?***

On HOA-owned streets, our contractor marks all the hydrants using wooden stakes with blue tape on them when 20 inches or more of snow is expected. This way they can return after the snow subsides and the roads are clear to dig them out to make them accessible for fire trucks. On VDOT streets, it is the residents' responsibility to mark and dig out the hydrants.

## ***14. Where should I put the snow from my driveway/sidewalk/parking space if not in the street?***

The HOA and VDOT ask that you do everything possible to avoid shoveling snow into the street as it creates roadblocks for your neighbors and adds to the snow volume that the plows must move out of the way. Try to pile the snow in your yard or find some common area open space (turf, not roadway) to place the snow.

## ***15. Why does the HOA mark the main roads with the orange snow stakes? Why doesn't it mark the private roads?***

Several years ago, the HOA invested in snow markers to identify the edges of the roads on the main roads (Claiborne/Waxpool/Truro Parish/Broadlands Blvd). Although these are VDOT roads, the association has an easement to maintain the turf on the medians and right of way on these roads. Therefore, the HOA must pay for turf repairs when they happen. These stakes assist the plows for two reasons. For one thing, the equipment that keeps these main roads clear is larger commercial-grade trucks that sit several feet higher off the ground than a regular pickup truck. That makes it that much harder to see the edges of the road. Additionally, when VDOT installed the curb on these roads, they rounded the edges to save concrete. This does not define the edge of the road in the same way that a square concrete curb does, and it's much easier for the plows to jump the curb and shave off large sections of turf in doing so. On the HOA roads, the plow equipment is generally smaller so the drivers can see a bit easier. Also, most, if not all the HOA roads have square curbs, making it slightly harder for the plow to jump the curb and damage the turf. While the HOA has observed turf damage on main roads following storms, the damage is significantly lower than it would have been had the stakes been absent. The stakes typically get installed in November before the ground freezes, so they can be driven deep enough to be stable. They do occasionally get broken, stolen, or vandalized, and are reinstalled or replaced as necessary.