



Snow Plow Safety

Driving in hazardous weather/road conditions to clear snow and ice accumulations from road and bridge surfaces so that the “motoring public” can travel safely around our communities can create special driving risks for our member’s employees. A driver must be alert to (but not limited to) people walking/standing near the road, parked cars on the shoulder, vehicle traffic, children playing, etc. Needless to say, a snowplow operator’s attention cannot be distracted for a single moment!

I. SNOWPLOW OPERATIONS:

- 1. DRIVER TRAINING** – Snowplow operators should be trained in the standard operating procedures (SOP) of your organization's winter maintenance program. This includes knowledge of their assigned equipment and their assigned snow routes. Becoming familiar with the snowplow routes before the snow starts flying has many benefits. Identifying and/or correcting problems early can help save equipment down-time and repair expenses. **Items to look for include (but not limited to) raised manhole covers and curb drains, concrete hazards, road surface defects, soft/narrow shoulders, etc.**
- 2. TRUCKS / EQUIPMENT READINESS** - Trucks and equipment must be road worthy and ready to meet the needs of winter maintenance activities. An effective preventive maintenance program is the key to ensuring that your equipment has minimal breakdowns. Drivers must operate their equipment with care and respect. Abusive behavior can prematurely cause trucks and equipment to breakdown.
- 3. WELL RESTED DRIVERS** - When snowplow operators are not getting proper rest, this can play a major role in snow plowing related accidents. Compound a fatigued driver with poor weather conditions and you can have the formula for disaster. All drivers should be made aware of the causes and symptoms of driver fatigue and how to prevent it.
- 4. DRUGS AND ALCOHOL** – The federal drug and alcohol regulations for CDL safety sensitive duties, have helped cut down on truck related accidents over the past ten years. Employees/drivers should be routinely reminded about the importance of drug avoidance, including the use of certain prescription and over the counter drugs. Alcohol consumption is illegal prior to and during the performance of safety sensitive jobs.

II. DEFENSIVE DRIVING: A snowplow operator must be a defensive driver at all times. A defensive driver must continuously stay alert to the behavior of other drivers and make every effort to avoid an accident. As part of defensive driving, consider the following 6 important points:

1. **Aim High in Steering** - The vehicle steering wheel should be held at the 2 and 10 o'clock positions. This allows the driver to keep total control of the vehicle, especially during evasive maneuvering.
2. **Get the Big Picture** – Look far enough down the road to see hazards before you arrive. This helps you spot problems not only ahead of you but to the sides as well.
3. **Keep your Eyes Moving** – Don't lock onto any one item for too long. Keep scanning from side to side to identify changing conditions.
4. **Leave Yourself an Out** – Don't box yourself into a poor situation as you travel. Try to keep other drivers out of your blind spots.
5. **Make Sure They See You** – A large orange/red/yellow colored truck generally can be spotted from a great distance. To help ensure they see you, keep your lights and beacons working during winter maintenance activities. To get eye contact, try a friendly tap on the horn!
6. **Equipment Backing** - Be careful backing up! In the process of winter maintenance activities, drivers are often required to perform frequent backing maneuvers. Often other drivers are confused or stressed by the weather/driving conditions and not paying attention. They may be directly behind you as you start to back to take another try at a snow drift or as you are maneuvering. Keep in mind that many objects can be hidden behind a snowplow truck. **Avoid unnecessary backing maneuvers whenever possible. Remember the dead space distance (80 – 90 ft.) behind your truck that you cannot see when using your mirrors.**

III. OTHER RELATED ITEMS: The following three topics should be included as part of your organization's winter maintenance/vehicle operations program.

- **Safe Vehicle Entry** - Climbing into the truck cab can be difficult especially when truck steps are slippery with snow and ice. Remember to use the 3-point contact method of climbing into/exiting vehicle cabs.
- **Seat Belts** - Wear your seat belt at all times! Don't be fooled into believing that being in a large vehicle can protect you from injury during a collision. The seat belt holds you in your seat and reduces the potential of being ejected from the cab.
- **Mirrors/Lights** – Drivers should do a walk around to check side mirrors and lights. Always make the necessary adjustments before getting on the road.