

extreme events Devon's response to severe weather

factsheet 1

keeping Devon's roads moving

Devon County Council staff in the Highway Operations Control Centre (HOCC) monitor the road and weather conditions 24 hours a day, every day of the year, and co-ordinate the salting operations. The HOCC monitors over 35 road weather stations, weather radar and satellite images and liaises closely with the Met Office and other highway authorities in neighbouring counties.

what we can do...

- Treat the most heavily trafficked roads with salt when there is a risk of ice or snow. This includes emergency services, some hospitals, major bus routes, secondary schools and access to large communities
- Monitor road conditions and direct resources to where problems are occurring
- Provide roadside salt bins and bags for self help
- React to highway flooding, and fallen trees
- Keep delays to a minimum
- Provide information to the media about the state of the road network including road safety advice. For more detailed information on our winter weather plans, including a map of our salting network, look at our Travelling in Winter leaflet on the website: www.devon.gov.uk/winter_travel.

what we are unable to do...

- Undertake salting or other work on the motorway (M5) or trunk roads (A30T, A38T, A303T and A35T) as these are the responsibility of the Highways Agency
- Treat the roads all at once – it takes 2.5 hours to treat the primary salting network in normal conditions, longer in the rush hour and for snow
- Salt all roads as this would be an enormous and costly task
- Treat the moors as a priority in heavy snow
- Always keep roads free of ice and snow, especially the less busy roads, many of which will remain untreated
- Treat footways generally, cycleways and private roads

what you can do...

- listen to weather forecasts and warnings so that you know when bad weather is expected
- tune in to local radio or television news for information about Devon's road network
- know which roads are treated and which are not, but remember that a treated road should not be considered "safe", particularly when temperatures are below freezing
- avoid non-essential travel in bad and cold weather and particularly at night when temperatures are usually at their lowest and darkness makes hazards less obvious
- allow extra time for your essential travel and reduce your speed when driving
- ensure that you have adequate food and supplies available if you are likely to be snowed in for a few days
- support those that may be vulnerable in your community, as some public services may need to be suspended in extreme weather
- Give snowploughs and gritters plenty of room – be patient, don't follow closely behind
- Don't park where it may prevent gritters from treating salting routes
- Use dipped headlights when rain, fog and snow cause poor visibility. See and be seen
- Watch out for cyclists and pedestrians – they can be difficult to see in bad conditions
- Try your brakes after going through deep water, braking lightly will help to dry them out
- In high winds watch out for sudden gusts and debris on the road
- In fog, you think you are travelling slower than you really are – slow down and don't use tail lights of the vehicle in front as a guide
- Never assume a road has been salted



Self help questions:

where are grit bins provided?

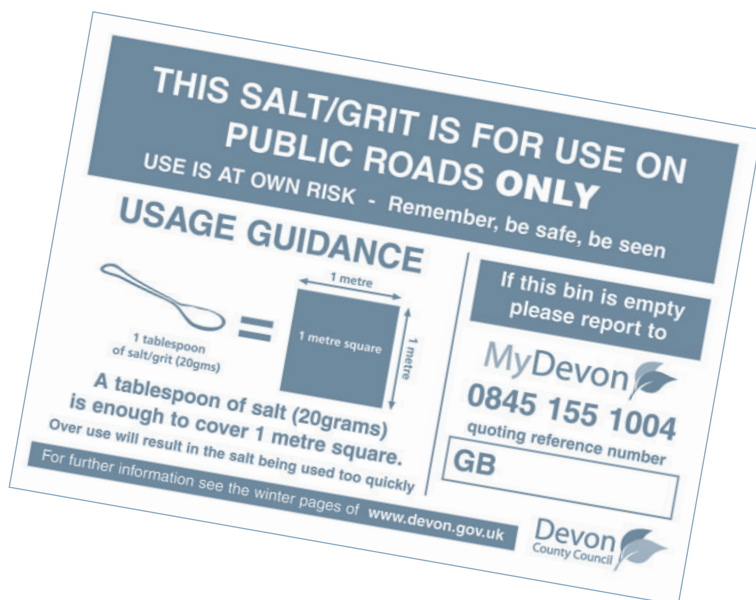
These are provided on roads that are not normally treated at known troublespots such as steep hills, frost hollows and sometimes on footpaths.

who can use the grit bins?

Grit bins are provided for the public to engage in some self-help and spread the salt/grit mix on the public highway. The bins will be filled prior to the start of the core winter period during October and November with a mixture of rock salt and grit and will be refilled during the winter if the weather is severe enough for them to be used.

how do I use the salt/grit?

Spread the salt/grit evenly on the road or footpath when ice or snow conditions are forecast. Only a small amount of salt is needed to prevent ice forming. The recommended amount is one to two tablespoons (20–40g) per square metre. Excessive use of the salt is of no benefit and will reduce stocks very quickly. Salt/grit from the grit bins must not be used on private land or driveways; salt for this purpose can be obtained from builders' merchants.



should I clear snow from the footpath?

In some countries it is a legal responsibility to clear snow from the footpath outside your property, however in this country it is not. If the parish council has a designated person to coordinate this in your area then you should liaise with them. Otherwise if you can clear the footpath safely and carefully then you may do so as a community service. Snow should not be cleared onto the road or heaped so high that it will create a hazard for drivers. Once snow has been removed from the road, ideally a salt/grit mix should be spread on the road surface to minimise the chance of ice forming later.

will I be liable if I engage in self-help on the public highway and someone has an accident?

Providing that you act in a responsible way, for example by following this guidance, and do not create alternative hazards by your actions then there is no reason why you should fear liability. However as with any area of life, if you act in a negligent way then you could be liable. Many home insurance policies (often part of the "contents" insurance) cover your legal liability to others as a private individual – check with your insurer.

will I be liable if I engage in self-help through the Parish Council?

Devon County Council (DCC) seeks to work closely with Parish Councils and support them if they seek to provide additional local services. This is an area of community involvement that may develop over the coming years. If a person designated by a parish council and who has been trained by DCC, trains and instructs other local volunteers in snow clearance, they will then be covered by DCC's public liability insurance.

my local grit bin is empty – how do I get it refilled?

Call the **MyDevon Roads & Transport line** on **0845 155 1004** and give the location of the grit bin. If the bin has a unique identity number inside the lid, please provide this number. It is not cost effective to refill bins individually during the winter but we plan to refill them when several in an area are known to be empty.

health and safety matters

- Always ensure that you put your safety first when spreading salt by ensuring that you can be seen by other road users and treat from the side of the road, not in the middle
- In no circumstances should water (hot or cold) be used to clear snow or ice as this will ultimately freeze and cause a greater hazard
- It is always advisable to wear high visibility clothing when working on or near a road
- Use a shovel or other tool for spreading salt that you are familiar with
- Do not overload the shovel