

# Michigan Winters...and you

## A motorists guide from the Genesee County Road Commission

Winter in Michigan is a special season, a time when our state's great beauty is enhanced by nature's handiwork. But winter also presents special problems for motorists. At the Genesee County Road Commission, we want to help make your winter driving safer and more enjoyable while giving you information and tips that will help us serve you better. Like most government agencies, funding remains a concern for us. In recent years, America has responded to the energy crunch with greater awareness and a demand for lighter, more fuel-efficient cars. In doing so, fuel consumption has declined significantly, thus conserving a valuable resource. At the Road Commission, we endorse your energy-saving efforts. But, since the funds we receive depend on fuel and weight tax dollars, reductions in either means we must do more with less. You can play a part in helping us meet our responsibilities for maintenance, construction and snow removal by using tips offered in this guide.

### *How we do it...*

The Genesee County Road Commission is responsible for clearing 411 miles of state trunklines, 478 miles of county primary roads, 289 miles of paved county local roads and 346 miles of gravel county roads. Critical routes and those that handle high traffic volumes are given first attention. Only after those routes are judged to be safe and passable are subdivision streets plowed. These streets make up the remaining 459 miles.

### **PRIORITIES:**

**First Priority** – Expressways, State trunklines. (I-75, US-23, I-69, I-475, M-57, M-21, M-15, M-13)

**Second Priority** – County primary roads. (Miller, Hill, Linden, and Center Roads)

**Third Priority** – Local section line-paved roads. (Wilson, Vassar and Maple Roads)

**Fourth Priority** – Local section line-gravel. (Moorish, Webster, Duffield)

**Fifth Priority** – Subdivision streets. (Residential areas, local access)

### *...and how you can help*

☞☞ Children should NEVER be allowed to play in plowed snow banks.

☞☞ When shoveling or plowing driveways, DO NOT plow snow into the roadway. Not only is this a traffic hazard, it is illegal.

☞☞ Always pile snow on the right side of the driveway (as you face the street). Plows will then push snow away from the driveway entrance as they pass by.

☞☞ Place garbage in your driveway so as our plow operators pass by, they won't scatter garbage over your yard.

☞☞ If a heavy storm is approaching, remove all vehicles from the streets before they are snowed in. This will allow for faster, safer street clearing.

☞☞ Our plow operators make every effort to plow close enough to mail boxes so that postal carriers have access to them. This occasionally results in damage to the boxes. It is, however, the property owner's responsibility to keep the mailbox approach clear.

☞☞ In most cases, the Road Commission does not assume responsibility for clearing roadways within the limits of incorporated cities and villages. However, inside the City of Burton, the Road Commission is responsible for all county primary roads.

### ***Winter Roads Require Special Care***

Winter does more damage to our roads than any other single force. In fact, 30 percent of the Road Commission budget is used for winter maintenance and to repair the effects of winter's ravages. There are nearly 1,600 miles of roads in Genesee County, which take about five days to plow under normal conditions. Plowing both sides of the county's roads is an enormous job, roughly equivalent to plowing a road from Flint to Key West, Florida, and back. Our general procedure is to salt until snow accumulates then plow. Sometimes salting and plowing are done at the same time. Salt is the fastest, safest method for clearing roads because by melting ice and snow, the water can run off. However, when temperatures reach 10 degrees or lower, even salt is ineffective, so drivers must be extra cautious. Critical and priority routes are re-salted as necessary as are bridges, curves, hills, overpasses and intersections. Because salt does not work on gravel roads, limited amounts of sand and slag are used on hills, curves, and stopping areas. These materials do not melt snow, but only provide temporary traction.

### ***Your Road Commission is Ready...are you?***

There are times when nature's unpredictable ways overwhelm our best-laid plans and tax our resources to the fullest. Like all Road Commissions, limited resources prevent us from maintaining staff and equipment at such a level that we are immediately prepared for the worst storms. Your best protection is to stay tuned into local radio and TV stations for updates on road conditions.

The Genesee County Road Commission prepares for winter with the following:

- ☞☞ A five-day salt supply is kept on hand with additional salt delivered daily as the supply is depleted.
- ☞☞ We monitor weather changes with advance alert capability.
- ☞☞ We have 17 road graders, 67 plow trucks with salt spreaders and 8 one-ton trucks equipped for plowing.
- ☞☞ Starting in December, a second-shift crew is added for the worst of the winter season.

### ***Tips for Safe Winter Driving***

- ☞☞ Slow down and stay alert. Remain far enough behind the vehicle ahead so you can stop safely.
- ☞☞ Start and stop slowly and evenly. Avoid jamming on the brakes. Instead, pump the pedal softly.
- ☞☞ To use anti-lock, don't pump the brakes. Just hold the brake pedal down and let anti-lock work for you. You may hear a motor clicking noise during a hard stop, but this is normal.
- ☞☞ Avoid sharp turns on slick surfaces. In a skid, release the accelerator and turn the front wheels in the direction you want to go. Do not brake. Front wheel drive vehicles handle differently on ice and snow than rear wheel drives.
- ☞☞ Beware of icy surfaces in shady spots, at intersections, on curves and hills and on or under bridges.

- ✍✍ Keep your vehicles properly tuned and winterized. Make sure the fuel tank is at least half full, tires are in good shape, exhaust system is in good repair and sufficient coolant is in the radiator.
- ✍✍ If your car becomes disabled, it is usually best to stay with it until help arrives. Get it off the roadway quickly, use motor heater sparingly and signal distress with a cloth, mirror or flashlight. If you must abandon it, leave a note on the windshield as to where you are going.