

Snowplow Operator Training Tips

As Public Safety employees, DPW Snowplow Operators are tasked with keeping the roads safe following winter storms and thus should be trained accordingly. This critical emergency response function is often taken for granted but the risks associated are high and require a professional, robust approach to ensure each operator is trained appropriately. Use the checklist below as a training guide.

Prewinter Snow and Ice Preparation

Prior to the season, each operator should inspect any plow routes they are expected to maintain.

- Inspect the plow route for hazards that could damage your plow, such as tree roots, raised manholes/catch basins, and road construction.
- Note changes to residential neighborhoods, such as new landscaping, retaining walls, basketball hoops, etc.
- Remind residents and business owners of rules regarding right of way and document your conversations.
- Set up a cones course in your DPW yard or a large parking lot in your City or Town to practice with the plow on, including backing.
- Train operators on how to attach the plow to the truck safely.
- Test all equipment to ensure it is working effectively such as GPS, laser guides, lights, alarms, etc.
- Communicate what to do when confronted by a disgruntled resident in the field. For example, following a damaged mailbox or plowed-in driveway. Be mindful that fatigue can cause irritability, but a professional and calm response is best to de-escalate these situations.
- Communicate what to do in the event of an accident or confrontation with residents.
- Explain the procedure for reporting violations such as vehicles parked illegally or obstacles found in the road.
- Give extra break time: remember that many drivers are not comfortable driving in the snow to always keep space between vehicles and allow for extra stopping time.
- Avoid backing when possible. Back up only when you have no other way to do the job.
- Use your mirrors constantly to monitor your side clearances and to ensure the plow is performing properly.



Inspect Your Vehicle

Train operators on how to inspect the plow to ensure it is working properly.

- Provide a refresher on what is expected of operators with pre/post trip inspections as well as post-run vehicle washing.
- If an accident occurs, it is important to document your vehicle inspections and preventative maintenance (PM's), as these records could be questioned.
- Check tires, fluid levels, lights, brakes, chains, plows, wings, spreaders, backup alarms, etc.
- Test all equipment, such as GPS, laser guides, radios, etc., to ensure it works effectively.
- Clearly communicate who is responsible for inspecting each vehicle and what to do if an issue is found. Remember that during the winter months, additional PM's could be required per the manufacturer's recommendation.
- During breaks and when it is safe to do so, inspect the vehicle to ensure lights are visible and that rocks or equipment in your bed are safely secured so it doesn't fall out and cause an accident.
- Clear snow and ice from headlights, backlights, windshield, and warning lights as needed.



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