

DGS Snow and Ice FAQs

What role does the Department of General Services (DGS) have during a snow or ice event in DC?

Part of the mission of DGS is to ensure District administrative facilities, schools, shelters, recreation centers and parks are operating smoothly without disruption of services to residents. As part of the District Snow Team, DGS is responsible for snow removal at approximately 850 properties, which includes the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) and DC Fire and EMS (DCFEMS) sites, DC Public Schools (DCPS) sites, Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) facilities and parks, and Department of Human Services (DHS) shelters and other municipal properties.

DGS pretreats and clears local government facility entryways, parking lots, driveways, walkways, alleyways, and private local government roads.

Is DGS responsible for removing snow from public and alleys?

DGS is not responsible for snow removal from public space such as streets and alleys. DPW and DDOT are responsible for snow and ice removal from these public spaces.

How does DGS prepare for snow and ice events?

In preparation for the snow and ice season, DGS prepares by stockpiling salt, and sand, at strategic locations. Equipment is tested on dry run exercises, employees are given specialized training, snow routes are driven, and private contractors with heavy equipment are contracted and placed on standby if needed to help with snow removal.

Depending upon the snow event, DGS will pretreat emergency service personnel, and other immediate-need facilities followed by other government facilities in a tiered approach. Pre-treatment typically begins 24 hours prior to the snow/ice event and is a 12-hour deployment to prepare key areas before snow accumulates. Completion timelines depend on weather conditions and accumulation.

How many people are deployed by DGS during snow and ice events?

DGS has over 250 workers deployed to work during snow and ice events.

What properties does DGS clear first? How are they prioritized?

DGS considers all District-owned properties that it manages as important facilities. However, during a winter storm event it is imperative that emergency service personnel, and other immediate-need facilities are cleared first. DGS follows a three-tier priority system for the District's properties as follows:

Priority 1 Tier

- Metropolitan Police Department Stations and Sites (MPD)

- DC Fire and Emergency Medical Services Stations and Sites (FEMS)
- District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS)
- Office of the State Superintendent of Education Bus Lots (OSSE)
- Department of Human Services Hypothermia Centers and Shelters (DHS)
- Essential and Emergency Municipal Buildings

Priority 2 Tier

- Senior Wellness Centers (DACL)
- Recreation and Community Centers (DPR)
- Remaining Government Buildings

Priority 3 Tier

- Pocket and Triangle Parks
- Dog Parks
- DGS Vacant Properties

How quickly does DGS mobilize for snow removal?

The District's Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency (HSEMA) is the District's lead agency during snow events. DGS mobilizes and implements its snow plan within three (3) hours of a notification from HSEMA of a snow event or advisory.

How long does it normally take for DGS to remove snow and ice?

A standard service cycle is typically executed within 12 hours for Priority Tier 1 and 2 sites.

DGS prioritizes pre-treatment and snow-clearing activities for front line agencies that provide essential and emergency services, such as fire and police stations, schools, recreation centers (including adjacent park spaces), senior wellness centers, and shelters, ensuring that vital services for residents continue without disruption. Once these critical areas are addressed, DGS will move on to clearing snow and ice at Priority 3 Tier locations.

How can residents report DGS properties in need of attention?

Please call the work order management unit at (202) 576-7676 to put in a service request.

Where should I go to find out about DC Public Schools (DCPS) closings?

Information regarding DCPS school delays or closing will be posted on the DCPS website (www.deps.dc.gov), DCPS social media platforms such as Twitter (@dcpublicschools), and local TV and radio stations.

Who is responsible for clearing snow and ice on land owned by the federal government?

DGS is only responsible for sites within our District managed portfolio. If a park is a Transfer of Jurisdiction property from the federal government, such as Takoma Park, DGS is responsible for servicing this location.

For a listing of local and national parks, please visit <https://dpr.dc.gov/service/find-park>.

How does DGS apply snow or salt melt at DGS-managed sites?

DGS uses salt or ice melt at specific sites based on expected snowfall to keep facilities safe and accessible. This proactive approach helps prevent ice buildup and makes snow and ice removal easier for our teams and staff on the ground. We apply the suitable amount based on best practices and operational needs, balancing safety with environmental care.

While some might assume we use too much salt or snow melt, we monitor the forecast, particularly when light rain is expected to precede snowfall. We are strategic and mindful of our application rates to ensure they are effective. Our main goal is to keep conditions safe for all visitors and staff while managing our resources responsibly.

How can I stay informed about winter weather conditions and the impact on the District?

AlertDC is the official District of Columbia communications system that sends emergency alerts, notifications, and updates to your devices. This system enables the District to provide you with critical information in situations such as traffic conditions, government closures, public safety incidents, and severe weather.

AlertDC is your connection to real-time updates and instructions to protect yourself, your loved ones, and your community. Sign up at alertdc.dc.gov.

For more information on District-wide snow removal, go to snow.dc.gov.