

## Winter in West Central Nebraska - A cold-weather driving guide for motorists

**Before traveling any significant distance in wintertime in Nebraska, motorists should make sure they have the following items in their vehicles:**

- Tire chains of the proper size;
- A shovel and small bag of sand or kitty litter to provide traction if your vehicle gets stuck;
- A snow brush and ice scraper;
- A can of deicer for frozen door locks and wiper blades;
- Blankets or sleeping bags;
- Water and dehydrated foods, in case you get stranded for an extended period;
- A well-stocked emergency first-aid kit with medical supplies and bandages;
- Flares and flashlights for nighttime emergencies; and
- Booster cables in case of a dead battery

### **Motorists should:**

- Make sure your car is running smoothly and check the brakes.
- Inflate your tires to the pressure recommended by the vehicle and tire manufacturers.
- Replace old windshield wiper blades and make sure your windshield cleaning fluid has antifreeze.
- Top off your fuel tank often. Running out of fuel is a calamity that's easy to avoid. Don't carry filled portable gasoline containers. They increase the chance of explosion in a collision.
- Make sure the oil and other fluids are full.
- Check lights and turn signals. Keep all lights free of ice and snow, and use low beams when driving through blowing snow.
- Remember to clean snow off your shoes before you get in the vehicle. Snow on your shoes can make your accelerator and brake pedals slippery, creating a safety hazard.

If you encounter **ice or snow** on the road, slow down. Drive slowly and in full control of your vehicle. Be alert for ice on bridges, overpasses and in shaded areas where it can remain even after the sun comes out and temperatures warm. Black ice is invisible on the road, so always watch for sudden changes in road surface conditions. There may be sharp transitions on the pavement from merely wet, to extremely icy. Icy roads topped by a blowing ground blizzard make for double trouble.

Slow down but keep moving and don't panic. Don't do anything quickly. Any steering or braking should be gentle and gradual. Most of all, be patient when driving on ice or snow. If the vehicle in front of you spins out, maintain control of your vehicle. If you stop to help someone who has slid off the road or been in a crash due to ice, be careful. Park well away, and, as you help, be alert and ready to get out of the way should anyone else lose control of their vehicle at the same icy location.



## 511 Traveler Information

Traffic events, cameras, winter road conditions, and more. Motorists in Nebraska can call 511 for timely road condition information. Call 511

<https://hb.511.nebraska.gov/#roadReports/search?layers=allReports%2CroadReports%2CwazeReports%2CwinterDriving&timeFrame=TODAY>

Commuters can subscribe to receive automatic e-mail and text notifications of highway closures, reopening's and travel advisories on specific highway sections through the 511 Notify service. You can find out more about the service and sign up for it on our 511 website.

## 511 On the Go

View Nebraska's 511 traveler information on your Android or iOS device by downloading the NE 511 app.

## Plow Tracker

Track Nebraska DOT's snowplows on the Nebraska state highway system and view photos of real-time road conditions. <https://plows.nebraska.gov/index.html>

## TRAVELING IN WEST CENTRAL NEBRASKA

### East-West highways

East-west transcontinental routes traverse Nebraska in the southern part of the District. Interstate 80 follows the Platte River Valley across the District from the High Plains of the Panhandle to the prairie region in Central Nebraska where winter wind is frequent and often causes ground blizzards and whiteout conditions. Harsh driving conditions can exist during a significant winter event. During a ground Blizzard the best option is to wait those out in the nearest towns or cities along I-80. They are spaced from 7 to 10 miles apart. However, if you are caught in a ground blizzard, stay calm, drive slowly and watch for other vehicles. Try your best to keep going, but, if you must stop, make sure you're well off the road to avoid being hit from behind.

I-80 primarily crosses long, flat expanses of plains, Strong winds and blizzards are probable. Roads can become slick during or icy during storms. Expect to encounter snow and ice on the road. Adjust your driving accordingly, and if you encounter an ice storm make sure you have tire chains and know how to use them.

Because motorists share the interstate with cars and commercial carriers (trucks) in snowy weather white out conditions occur when commercial vehicles` pass. Drivers are advised to slow down, stay alert and proceed with caution. **Do not stop in any of the Driving Lanes.**

### North-South highways

Several routes cross the District North- South through the Sandhills. Because the prevailing wind is from the west, North West drivers should be aware of strong crosswinds and limited visibility during storms on these roads. The distance between communities can be greater the 20 miles with limited services. because it is a two-lane road and not a divided highway, it requires even greater driving attention during bad weather. Harsh driving conditions can exist across all these areas.

## Traffic volumes determine snow-control priorities

When storms hit, NDOT maintenance crews are on the road applying deicer or a salt-sand mixture to improve traction on curves, hills, bridges and stop signs and plowing. In significant snowfall or in extreme cold, operators may be plowing only. NDOT Uses information provided by a network of weather forecasters, monitoring sensors in the road surface at remote locations and a growing network of CCTV cameras, Supervisors also run road patrols. Maintenance crews can observe conditions and be on the scene when a storm begins, putting down a timely application of deicer, in some cases, liquid deicers are used to prevent an accumulation of ice or ice and snow. If you are involved in an accident without injury and your vehicle can move, Move your vehicle to the shoulder off the roadway. When Ice or snow occurs the Regions snow-removal plan goes into effect. It establishes sanding and plowing priorities for the system of interstate, arterial and collector routes, based on the relative amounts of traffic the highways carry. Three levels of service have been established.

**High-volume – Interstate or principal arterial routes – 24-hour service.**

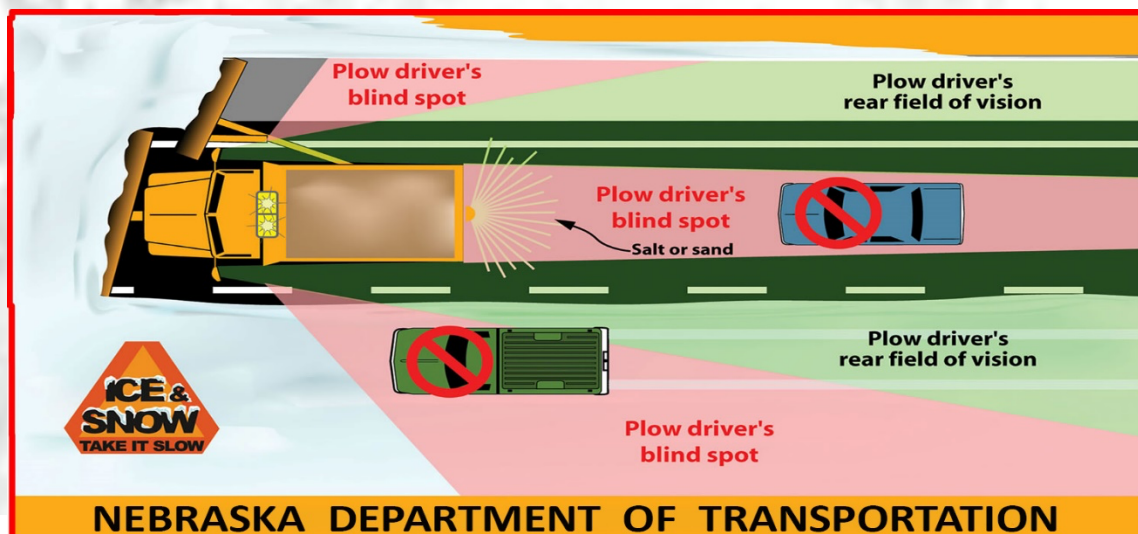
Plowing operations will be performed beginning at the start of the storm regardless of time of day and continued until bare pavement is being achieved for the driving lanes. Nighttime operations may be performed with reduced staff after the front passes when the roadway is free of as much ice and snowpack as is practical and can be traveled safely at reasonable speeds.

**Medium volume -U.S. and Nebraska Highways lesser-used arterial routes- Limited to Daytime operations.**

The goal is to keep the roadway passable for drivers who are taking reasonable winter driving precautions, although with less emphasis on keeping the pavement bare. Plowing operations will be performed with available resources starting early in the morning and during daylight hours. If necessary, crews will work up to 12 hours. Deicing chemicals may be limited to curves stop signs and hills.

**Low volume – Rural, less travelled routes, links or spurs – Limited to daytime hours.**

Service is provided after high-volume and medium-volume routes have been cleared, with exceptions sometimes made for routes that carry school buses or similar traffic. Low-volume service is provided only during daylight hours. Low Volume State highways receive service as resources become available from higher Priority routes. Deicing chemicals may be limited to curves stop signs and hills. During severe storms, scheduling depends on available personnel and equipment. Roads tagged for high-volume service will be plowed first; medium- and low-volume highways will be handled as soon as possible thereafter. As bad weather clears, cleanup is undertaken only after all roads have been provided with their designated levels of service.







## Road Closures

NDOT officials are the authority to close roads whenever they consider it prudent and necessary for public health or safety. During the winter, this means highways can be closed due to crashes or because of ice, snow or poor visibility. Remember, although conditions may be favorable at the closure gate, conditions can be much different a few miles down the road. **Do not stop in any of the Driving Lanes.**

Violating a road closure carries a penalty and the possibility of Jail. However, the real danger of running a road closure gate is being injured in a crash or getting stranded and facing the risks of hypothermia or even freezing to death. **Do not stop in any of the Driving Lanes.**

### Rolling Closure:

The small towns along routes with heavy through-traffic have limited resources in terms of parking, fuel, hotel rooms and other amenities. When a town is at capacity, which can happen during a long-duration closure, the closure will be rolled back to the next town to avoid stranding travelers in a location without adequate services. The road may be open in the direction leading away from the affected area.

### Local Traffic Permitted:

In some cases, a road may be closed to through-traffic, but commuters and local residents may be permitted to travel. In these cases, WYDOT will issue a "Local Traffic Permitted" restriction. When this is in effect, local residents and commuters are permitted to travel within the designated area, but thru travel for trucking or long-range travelers is not authorized.

### No Unnecessary Travel:

The road is open, but travel is not recommended due to hazardous driving conditions. Generally, this advisory is posted during winter months due to extremely icy conditions or when visibility is limited due to blowing snow, or when a combination of conditions or drifting makes travel ill-advised. Only the most urgent of situations should warrant travel in a No Unnecessary Travel advisory. Drivers who attempt such travel should be familiar with local conditions and be very experienced with winter driving. Please keep in mind that by choosing to travel during hazardous conditions, you may be interfering with maintenance personnel and their efforts to keep a road open.

### Impassable:

The road has been blocked or impassable. NDOT has not barricaded the road and traveling to the next community is not possible. This advisory is posted during winter months due to extreme weather or blizzard conditions where drifting is making passage risky and motorists may become stranded or the road has drifted shut or is blocked by stranded vehicles. Motorists are advised *not to travel*; you may be alone until the storm subsides or you may be interfering with maintenance personnel and their efforts and delay the opening of the route. These roads are remote, impassable and difficult to travel in any significant event..

## Definition of impassable

: incapable of being passed, traveled or crossed.