

Winter driving tips

Before setting off:

- Ask yourself if the journey is really necessary
- Allow time to prepare the car; make sure all windows and mirrors are free from ice and snow and the heater has de-misted the inside
- Check the lights and wipers are in good working order
- Check the tyres are in good condition
- Carry ice scrapers and de-icer. It's also worth carrying a mobile phone with a fully charged battery, a torch, first-aid kit, tow rope, blankets, warm coat and boots, jump leads, snow shovel, warning triangle, and an old sack or rug (to put under the wheels if you do get stuck)
- Plan routes on major roads which are more likely to be gritted

When driving:

- SLOW DOWN. Ice can still be present, even on a gritted route
- Remember stopping distances can be up to ten times further in icy conditions
- Always apply brakes gently. Release them and depress clutch if the car skids
- Manoeuvre carefully and gently
- Select second gear when pulling away, easing your foot off the clutch gently to avoid wheel-spin
- If you do get stuck, straighten the steering and clear the snow from the wheels. Put a sack or old rug in front of the driving wheels to give the tyres some grip. Once on the move again, try not to stop until you reach firmer ground
- If you find yourself behind a gritter, please keep a safe distance behind it and be patient. DO NOT try to overtake
- Listen to local radio stations to check road conditions
- If you need to abandon your car, try to position the vehicle in a location that allows gritters and other road users to pass

If you require any further information relating to the winter maintenance service, you can contact us by:

Tel: 0121 303 6644

Email: highways@birmingham.gov.uk

Post: Highways
1 Lancaster Circus
Queensway
Birmingham
B4 7DQ

To view roads identified for gritting, please go to:

www.birmingham.gov.uk/highways

Keeping Birmingham Moving



Highways – Winter Maintenance Service



working in partnership with





This leaflet explains how Amey and Birmingham City Council aim to keep traffic moving safely during the winter months

Amey is the company responsible for managing and maintaining Birmingham's highways, on behalf of and working in partnership with Birmingham City Council.

Every October, a large scale 'Winter Maintenance Service' begins. This service is co-ordinated by a team of specialists who plan gritting routes, monitor weather forecasts and send out gritting vehicles. A fleet of gritters is on 24-hour standby, seven days a week.

How do we decide what roads to grit?

National guidance suggests that certain roads should be treated, for example major roads in the city, bus routes and routes identified by the emergency services – these roads are known as the Priority Treated Network. In Birmingham, this network covers approximately 1200 kilometres (750 miles) – nearly 50% of the total length of all roads within the city. This is about the same distance as it would be to drive from Birmingham to Berlin!

During severe weather we receive lots of enquiries from residents asking for their roads to be gritted – please remember that it is not possible to grit every road or pavement in the city. Work has to be prioritised and private and/or unadopted roads are not treated.

When do we grit?

Planned gritting takes place on nights when ice is predicted on road surfaces. We try to avoid gritting during rush hours. Reactive gritting is undertaken in response to accumulations of snow and ice during very severe weather.

How long does it take to grit?

Within an hour of call-out, gritters are fully loaded and on the road. It takes 3-4 hours to grit the whole of the priority network in Birmingham. Difficulties can arise when roads are obstructed by traffic or parked cars.

What do we grit with?

We grit with rock salt crushed to resemble light brown gravel. Once spread and worked into the road surface by traffic, it appears white on dry roads.

Using technology to grit effectively

We have fitted all of our gritting fleet with GPS (Global Positioning System) technology together with a system that electronically records when, where and how much Amey has gritted the roads. This provides valuable information regarding salt usage to help plan future gritting routes. This also saves on fuel and reduces carbon emissions.

How does snow affect gritting?

Salt is spread before snow fall. It will not stop snow settling, but speeds up melting with the action of car tyres moving over it. During continuous snow fall more salt is spread to reduce the depth.

We are able to plough deep accumulations of snow. For every 50mm that falls in Birmingham, 1.4 million cubic metres of snow has to be cleared. That's enough to fill 22 Rotundas!

What about pavements?

Pavement gritting is focused on areas where it is most needed, such as the city centre and other major shopping areas.

When severe weather conditions persist, every effort is made to clear snow from pavements around shopping centres, hospitals and railway stations.

What are grit bins for?

Grit bins are provided as a self-help facility, usually near places that could be hazardous - such as busy junctions, steep hills and sharp bends. The salt is for use on the public highway only. It is not for private areas such as drives and garden paths. Rock salt is widely available from DIY stores and builders merchants for private use.

Did you know?

- We typically grit 40-50 times per year
- We have 25 gritters at our depot
- Each gritter carries seven tonnes of salt
- Over 1,200 grit bins are placed around the city
- We have ten weather stations for our area which measure conditions at each site and send information to a central hub

