



Saskatchewan
Ministry of
Highways and
Infrastructure



Don't get *plowed* in the Snow Zone.

Winter Road Conditions/Highway Hotline
Information Kit for Media

INTRODUCTION

Mandate

The mandate of the online Road Conditions information system and Highway Hotline is to provide updated information to the travelling public as it relates to the transportation system. The information provided most frequently applies to highway driving conditions, both summer and winter. We also provide other information such as weight restrictions and clearances of bridges and structures. With this information, highway users can make informed travel decisions. This can contribute to safer travel and reduced collision and injury rates.

For purposes of operating and maintaining the highway system, the province is divided into 15 areas. Each area has an Area Manager and support staff that manages the maintenance and operation of the highway system. During regular office hours, maintenance staff provide reports to area office staff who update highway condition information on our system. Outside of regular office hours, maintenance staff report conditions directly to Hotline staff. All highway maintenance vehicles such as snowplows and graders, are equipped with hands free cell phones or satellite phones. This allows for continuous updates to the highway information system at any time.

The public must have confidence in this information and it is essential we provide the information in a timely manner. To accomplish this, we utilize the latest technology to deliver the information. Information is provided to the public, either through our website or recorded voice systems, commonly called the Highway Hotline. The process of updating either the voice system or the website is fully automatic and only takes a few minutes.

The Highway Hotline office in Saskatoon is responsible for the operation of the provincial Highway Hotline system. During the winter, services are provided on a 24-hour basis from Saskatoon.

If you have any questions about online Road Conditions information or the Highway Hotline, contact Communications Branch:

Kirsten Leatherdale
Highways and Infrastructure
Regina
Office: 306-787-8484
Cell: 306-536-9692
Email: kirsten.leatherdale@gov.sk.ca

PUBLIC NUMBERS FOR HIGHWAY CONDITION INFORMATION

The general public, as well as the media, can obtain information on current highway conditions, ferry crossing information, road restrictions and out-of-province road information numbers on our **website at www.highways.gov.sk.ca**, or from recorded voice announcers at any time by calling our Highway Hotline numbers.

The website provides road condition information in a variety of formats. Users can view the interactive Winter Conditions Map, enter the highway number in question and click "go" for a text description, or scroll down our list of highways and sections.

When calling the phone lines below, the caller must know the highway number for which they want information:

SaskTel Cellular Network: *ROAD

Saskatchewan toll-free: 1-888-335-7623*

Regina city and surrounding toll areas: 787-7623

Saskatoon city and surrounding toll areas: 933-8333

Note: * The toll-free number cannot be accessed when dialing from within Saskatoon or Regina.

Media Updates

The Highway Hotline send regular e-mail reports to all media outlets with a summary of provincial highway conditions during a weather event. We rely on your help to get the information out to the travelling public in a timely manner.

HOURS OF OPERATION and UPDATE TIMES - Highway Hotline

The Ministry has two distinct operating seasons: summer and winter.

During the **summer season** the Highway Hotline office in Saskatoon is open daily from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., except for statutory holidays and weekends. Road conditions, mainly related to construction, are generally updated on a daily basis.

During the **winter season** – Nov. 1 to mid-April (dependant on weather) – the Highway Hotline office in Saskatoon is open 24-hours per day, 7 days a week. Highway conditions are updated as road condition changes are observed, including statutory holidays and weekends.

The public is constantly reminded that highway conditions can and do change in a matter of minutes.

Transition Periods – Level of Service – Fall to Winter and Winter to Spring

There may be occasions when a winter storm occurs before or after 24-hour road condition service is in place. In these cases, Area Offices and/or Highway Hotline staff will keep highway conditions updated past regular office hours. If a storm is forecast to last more than a day, consideration will be given to re-implementing 24-hour live service to callers and the media. However, this will only occur when a winter storm affects a substantial part of the province, when highway travel may be compromised and when the storm is forecast to continue for more than a day.

MEDIA SERVICES – HOW TO OBTAIN INFORMATION

Winter

During the winter season, the Highway Hotline office in Saskatoon is staffed 24-hours a day, seven days a week.

There are three options available for obtaining highway condition information:

- From our web site at www.highways.gov.sk.ca
- From the recorded information on our Highway Hotline
- Live consultation - you may talk directly to our staff by calling 306-933-8338. This is an unlisted number dedicated to the media and police services. Do not give this number out to the public.
All inquiries after hours, weekends and holidays should be directed to the Hotline office in Saskatoon.

The media and police services line has message manager service, and if the phone is busy, you will be routed to message manager. Leave your name and number, and a staff member will return your call as soon as possible.

During severe weather conditions, a general provincial road report will be e-mailed to all radio and television stations. You may also e-mail a request for information to: hotline@highways.gov.sk.ca.

NOTE: All Ministry staff report and use the standard **Winter Road Condition Terminology** (copy appended). This is essential to maintain uniformity and accuracy in providing highway condition information. We would encourage the media to use this same terminology.

Summer

During the spring and summer, media can access construction information, closures due to flooding or forest fires, ferry closures and other road condition information through the public website and phone numbers or through the number dedicated to media and police services.

No services are provided after hours, weekends or holidays during the summer except for emergencies such as flooding or forest fires. During these situations, regular reports will be faxed to the media in impacted area(s).

INQUIRY GUIDELINES

Highway Hotline staff are able to provide general information to media on road conditions throughout the province. However, questions regarding policies, procedures, funding or other areas of interest outside the scope of road conditions should be directed to **Communications Branch**:

Director, Doug Wakabayashi	office: 306-787-4804	cell: 306-536-0049
Manager, Kirsten Leatherdale	office: 306-787-8484	cell: 306-536-9692

WINTER ROAD CONDITION TERMINOLOGY

Good Winter Driving	No specific problems, but there could be the occasional slippery section or snow drift.
Icy	The entire driving surface is covered with ice.
Slush	A build up of slush on the driving surface as a result of moderate or heavy snow fall when pavement temperatures are at or near the freezing point, creating driving conditions that may cause an unsuspecting driver to lose control of a vehicle.
Icy or Slippery Sections	A minor situation identified due to intermittent rain, frost, sticking snow or ice patches (includes light pavement frost).
Wet/freezing	Highway is wet, subject to freezing as temperatures drop.
Pavement Frost	Build up of frost that reduces braking power of vehicles.
Drifting Snow	Ground drifting caused by winds which may affect surface conditions on the highway, such as sticking snow, or may reduce visibility.
Swirling Snow	A condition created by traffic in loose snow that reduces visibility.
Loose Snow	Less than 8 cm of loose snow covers the driving surface that may cause some driving difficulties.
Heavy Snow	More than 8 cm of loose snow covers the driving surface. Traffic encounters problems when meeting or passing.
Snow Packed	This condition exists mainly on gravel roads where the entire driving surface is covered with packed snow.
Snow Drifts	Small snow dunes exist on the driving surface at intermittent intervals.
Travel Not Recommended	This means that visibility is less than 200 meters; and/or the surface is icy; and/or the highway is doubtful; and/or the highway may be blocked.
Closed	Highway is impassable (or has been closed for operational reasons).
Fog	Reported only when visibility is reduced.
Visibility Zero	You can see less than 200 meters. Under this condition, highway maintenance equipment will not begin work on the road until visibility improves. Equipment already on the road may be removed if visibility continues to deteriorate to 100 or less.
Visibility Reduced	You can see less than 800 meters.
Visibility Good	You can see more than 800 meters.