

Maintenance Advisory

MA 2009-01

January 7, 2009

From Jon W. Reincke, Engineer of Operations

White Shoulder Policy

The White Shoulder policy provides direction for good snow removal operations on shoulders during winter storms. Leaving shoulders with two inches of snow or less (i.e. leaving the shoulder “white”) after a storm is prescribed. This practice is based on the function of a shoulder, which is to allow a recovery area for errant vehicles and emergency parking. In addition, the shoulder is designed to allow surface water from the road to flow evenly into the ditch.

During winter operations, shoulders on all routes with more than two inches of snow should be cleared even if overtime is required. To avoid damaging the shoulders while clearing snow, the following procedures shall be used:

During any winter event apply only enough blade or plow pressure so that the plowed shoulder behind the blade or plow will remain lightly snow-covered (two inches or less) or “white” rather than exposing a bare shoulder surface. Wing plows shall not be used on gravel shoulders.

Blading or plowing a shoulder with a fully loaded truck can cause damage to the shoulder, especially during snowfalls in the early fall and late spring when shoulders may be soft. When clearing gravel shoulders, underbody blades, front plows and wing plows with excess pressure, as well as high-speed plowing, can throw shoulder material into ditch areas from which it cannot be removed. Shoulder blading or plowing can destroy and displace material creating a secondary ditch. Water may then flow along this secondary ditch to a weak spot and cause erosion and possibly washouts in the spring of the year.

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