

Winter Services

Mini Guide



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Gritting and ploughing

Throughout the winter months, we aim to keep the roads, redways and footways as safe as possible by gritting or ploughing if needed. Our winter maintenance season is from October to April.

We monitor weather conditions and forecasts daily using the latest technology for Ice Prediction and the gritting team are on standby 24-7.

Using this information the highways team decide which routes need to be covered, when to send the gritters out and how much rock salt [grit] is needed. They will also decide when the best time to grit the network will be taking into account rush hour periods and when the road surface temperature will go below zero.

The gritting lorries have snow ploughs fitted on the front although these are only used if the snow is over 2 inches to remove the snow effectively.

Salt bins

There are over 400 salt bins located across MK. To locate where your nearest grit bin is visit the Interactive Mapping tool on our website, www.milton-keynes.gov.uk
Select the 'Winter Maintenance' box on the left, grit bin locations are shown by a G inside a yellow box.

These yellow salt bins are checked and filled up each year in autumn if less than half full. Green or grey grit bins are provided and maintained by local parish councils. There may be some old yellow grit bins still in use around MK however if they are not listed on the Winter Maintenance map as listed above, they will not be on our schedule for refills.

The salt in these bins is for use on public footpaths, redways and roads only, not private roads or driveways.

To request a refill or report a damaged grit bin, call 01908 252353. Damaged bins will be removed but not replaced. We may instead drop bags of rock salt during prolonged icy or snowy weather.

Priority routes

Based on the weather reports we will decide which routes we need to grit or plough.

Priority 1

This includes the grid road network, main bus routes and link roads to the rural areas. These are salted each time using up to 9 gritting lorries and it takes around 3 hours to complete each time.

Priority 2

This route includes the important distribution roads that lead to schools, retail and industrial areas and any other key places not included on the Priority 1 routes.

Priority 3

This route is the remainder of the road network but isn't usually treated if the P1 and P2 routes are not passable due to limited resources.

Snow Ploughing

If there is heavy snow on the roads (over 2 inches) we will fit the snow ploughs to the gritting lorries and plough the highest priority roads e.g. access to the hospital, villages, grid roads. Anything under this level of snow the ploughs will not be used as they may become damaged and could damage the road surface too.

Footways and Redways

Priority redways (H6 and V6) and some key footways will be salted during long periods of icy, snowy weather. There are over 400 grit bins around MK which can be used to salt public footways and redways too. Council owned salt bins are yellow and are listed on the My MK Mapping tool under 'Winter Maintenance'.

Car parks

Council-owned car parks in CMK will be treated at the same time at the P1 routes.

A5 and M1

These are under the responsibility of National Highways (formally Highways England) so will be gritted by them.

Unadopted Road, redways and footways

MK City Council will only salt Council-owned roads, redways and footways. Unadopted [private] roads and footways are the responsibility of the landowner to maintain. This applies to new estates where the roads and footways are not adopted by the Council. The landowner, usually the developer, is responsible for gritting them.

You can check if a road is adopted (Council-owned) using the [My MK Mapping tool](#) on our website. Any adopted highway areas are shown in blue.

How rock salt works

Rock salt is effective as it has a lower freezing point than water. Once we've spread the rock salt onto a road, footway or redway, the crystals are crushed by the vehicles or pedestrians moving over the surface helping to spread it further across the surface. The crushed rock salt then reacts with the moisture on the surface and prevents ice forming. Salt is effective until the temperature dips below -5 degrees °C and on temperatures below -10 degrees °C it will have less effect.

We use brown rock salt which is often called 'grit'. This is covered in a molasses substance to help it stick to the surface better. It is drier than the white rock salt which helps with spreading. It's also cheaper but can leave a reddish stain on surfaces. If the temperature drops below that the effects are reduced and below minus 15 it is less effective.

Safe driving in winter

Even though we make every effort to keep our network safe, drivers should be aware of the conditions and drive to them. Here's some helpful advice for driving in winter:

- Adjust your speed to the road conditions and allow extra stopping distance on icy roads
- Don't drive too close to the vehicle in front
- Check your vehicle regularly especially wiper blades, tyres and battery, top up anti-freeze and screenwash
- Keep emergency items in your vehicle in case you break down such as a blanket, torch, snacks and a shovel.
- Don't abandon your vehicle if you get stuck - stay with it until help arrives.
- Remove ALL snow and ice from your vehicle before you set off - it's the law!
- In poor conditions only travel if absolutely necessary.

Self help

We can all do our bit to help out during the winter months. There are over 400 salt bins across MK for residents to use on the public footways, roads and redways. Use this to keep the local areas safe to use, especially near places like care homes or schools. You can also help elderly or disabled neighbours by clearing any snow away from their access routes.

Remember to use the rock salt sparingly so it will not be wasted. 10-15 grams of rock salt is enough for one square metre of road or footway. That's about 3 teaspoons of rock salt.

Before shovelling snow, look for a suitable place to move it, so that it does not block people's paths or cause a problem elsewhere e.g. over a drain where it can freeze again.

Frequently asked questions

Does rock salt melt snow?

No - instead it forms a saline (salt water) solution with the ice or snow. Salt water has a lower freezing point. Sometimes snow falls too quickly for the process to happen. If snow goes over 2 inches we will fit ploughs to the gritters. Anything below that the ploughs will scrape on the road.

What time do you grit?

Depending on the severity of the weather, we may carry out a grit run in the evening or in the early morning ahead of the rush hour if possible.

What is rock salt (grit) and where does it come from ?

The salt we use in MK comes from a mine near Winsford in Cheshire. It is brown in colour which is why it is sometimes called grit. It is coated with a raw sugar by-product called molasses which helps it to stick to the surface better.

Can I use salt from the grit bins on my drive?

No - the rock salt in the grit bins is provided by the Council for use on public roads, footways and redways. Any abuse of the grit bins will result in their removal.

I've not seen any gritters out on the road network but it is icy

Our gritting team are usually out on the network overnight, early morning or in the afternoon covering a wide area so you may not always see them on your route but they are out salting or have already treated the network.

I've seen a grit lorry on the road and it wasn't spreading

The gritter may be on its way to start its gritting route or it will be on the way back to the depot to refill.

Why don't you grit all the estate roads?

It's not possible to cover all the estate roads and the road network too. We don't have the resources or the budget to do this so we prioritise our routes. The lorries would not be able to get around many streets either due to their size and the number of parked cars. Instead we provide over 400 salt bins and cover the major routes.