

## WHAT IS RCOC?

The Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) maintains Michigan's largest county road system, with more than 2,700 miles of county roads (including 750-plus miles of gravel roads). Only the state highway system is larger. RCOC also maintains:

- ◆ Approximately 80 bridges,
- ◆ Approximately 1,500 traffic signals,
- ◆ Approximately 150,000 traffic signs and
- ◆ More than 230 miles of state highway

## SAFETY FIRST

As a matter of policy, major road improvement projects are conducted by the Road Commission based on a safety ranking system. At RCOC "Safety First" is more than a motto.



## RCOC:

- Is separate from county general government and does not receive any revenue from property taxes.
- Receives the majority of its funding from the state-collected gas tax and vehicle-registration fee.
- Has congested roads due to the tremendous growth in the county.
- Receives no direct revenue from growth and development.
- Pays \$2.5 million or more to pave a mile of gravel road.
- Pays \$8 million to widen one mile of road from two lanes to five.
- Is located in a state that has ranked in the bottom 10 states in state and local road funding for more than 50 years.

**BOARD OF ROAD  
COMMISSIONERS:**  
**RONALD J. FOWKES**  
**GREGORY C. JAMIAN**  
**Andrea LaLonde**

**Dennis G. Kolar, PE**  
Managing Director

**Gary Piotrowicz, PE, PTOE**  
Deputy Managing Director  
County Highway Engineer

## RCOC MISSION STATEMENT

RCOC strives to provide the public with leadership in:

- Safe and convenient roads
- Sound financial management
- Responsive and dependable service
- Respect for the environment
- Sensitivity to community concerns

## HAVE A QUESTION FOR THE ROAD COMMISSION?

CALL OR WRITE:

DEPARTMENT OF CUSTOMER SERVICES

2420 PONTIAC LAKE ROAD  
WATERFORD, MI 48328

TOLL-FREE (877) 858-4804

TDD: (248) 858-8005

OR, visit RCOC online at

**[www.rcocweb.org](http://www.rcocweb.org)**

# WINTER ROAD MAINTENANCE



**Keeping the roads clear  
in Oakland County**

# RCOC WINTER ROAD MAINTENANCE

## WINTER ROAD MAINTENANCE

For the Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC), winter road maintenance consists primarily of keeping the roads free of ice and snow in the winter.

RCOC maintains more than 2,700 miles of county roads. It also maintains 230-plus miles of state highways on behalf of the Michigan Department of Transportation.

The Road Commission strives to keep these roads clear and passable during the winter. To accomplish this, RCOC has more than 100 snowplows/salt trucks that are ready to roll out 24 hours a day, seven days a week during the winter.

## MONITORING THE WEATHER

In winter road maintenance, half the battle is knowing when the snow is coming and how much is coming. While it is virtually impossible to predict this with absolute certainty, RCOC employs a variety of state-of-the-art forecasting tools to make the most informed decisions possible.

Among the tools that RCOC relies on is a professional weather service geared toward road agencies that provides detailed storm alerts. RCOC also uses Doppler radar and receives updates from the National Weather Service.

## ROAD PRIORITIES

RCOC winter maintenance crews maintain state and county roads in Oakland County on a priority basis.

At the top of the list are “critical priority” roads, which carry traffic volumes greater than 10,000 vehicles per day per lane. This includes the freeways and major surface streets such as Woodward and Telegraph.

Next are “priority 1” roads, which carry traffic volumes of 2,500 to 10,000 vehicles per day per lane, such as major “mile” roads. Priority 2 and 3 roads are those with less traffic volumes.

After clearing higher-volume roads, crews move to neighborhood or subdivision roads which see far fewer vehicles and where the cars travel at much slower speeds. Long-lasting storms can delay trucks from getting into subdivisions for several days or more.

RCOC also divides the day into service periods, with weekday rush-hour periods being the most critical and overnight weekend periods the least.

## RUSH-HOUR STORMS

The storms likely to cause the most inconvenience are those that strike during or just before the rush hour. Salting in advance does little good (though RCOC does often spray main roads with liquid brine, or salt water, ahead of time, which slows the formation of ice). During rush-hour storms, RCOC trucks are battling the same traffic as other motorists, as they attempt to plow or salt, which significantly slows the road-clearing efforts.



## THE HIGH-TECH APPROACH

RCOC has deployed its advanced Fleet Management Program to best manage its fleet of winter road maintenance vehicles. The program uses cutting-edge satellite-based technology to provide advanced fleet management for RCOC’s winter road-maintenance vehicles across the county.

Through the program, the agency is improving winter maintenance efficiency and cost effectiveness. Using satellite tracking, the program provides Road Commission fleet managers with instant, real-time computer displays showing where all their vehicles are, what they are doing, what they have been doing, etc. Multiple sensors on each truck also provide a constant flow of real-time weather and operational data to management computers.

The program provides fleet managers with a wealth of data that was never available to them in the past. RCOC’s Fleet Management Program was the first such Web-based application in the nation.

## SAFETY FIRST

If you’re driving during winter weather and you see a salt truck/snowplow, use care. RCOC drivers are specially trained to operate these large trucks, but, because the trucks are larger and heavier than most vehicles, they take longer to stop and need more room to turn. Please give them room to do their jobs.

## COSTS OF WINTER MAINTENANCE

RCOC spends about \$12 million annually -- or more, depending on the winter -- on winter maintenance, including \$4 million or more on salt alone. The worst part is there are no road improvements to show for this investment.

Responding to a single, severe 24-hour storm alone can cost RCOC \$800,000 or more, including the cost of salt, vehicle maintenance, employee wages and overtime and other costs. A light dusting of snow can also be costly for RCOC — even if residents don’t have to shovel their driveways, the Road Commission often still has to salt the roads.

## WINTER MAINTENANCE FACTS

- ◆ **RCOC salt trucks/snow plows are kept at six garages throughout the county.**
- ◆ **Guidelines call for 400 pounds of salt to be applied to each two-lane mile of pavement.**
- ◆ **During the winter, RCOC salt truck/snowplow drivers are on call and salt trucks are loaded and ready to go 24/7.**
- ◆ **RCOC drivers can be on the road for up to 16 hours before they must take a five-and-a-half-hour break.**
- ◆ **A salt truck can use up to 12 tons of salt in a single “run”.**
- ◆ **At temperatures below 20 degrees, salt begins to lose its effectiveness.**
- ◆ **At 0 degrees, salt does virtually nothing.**
- ◆ **RCOC limits the use of sand on paved roads because it clogs storm drains and doesn’t melt ice. Sand is used on gravel roads where there are no storm sewers and salt is less effective.**