



Department  
for Transport

# Temporary Snow Ploughs Guidance Note

November 2013

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# Introduction

This guidance note provides information to operators of freight or other heavy vehicles on the use of snow ploughs, attached temporarily to their existing vehicles. This would allow the operators to clear their own access roads quickly in times of heavy snowfall, without needing to purchase special vehicles.

Some local authorities and commercial organisations already use temporary snow ploughs. This note draws on that experience to provide general guidance to anyone else thinking of following suit.

There are several ways in which temporary snow ploughs can be used to help businesses and the wider community. The following examples of schemes in use may be helpful.

# Examples of schemes

## Wiltshire Council

Wiltshire uses its own ploughs and contractors to clear main roads and has a scheme whereby farmers clear smaller roads. The farmers use their own vehicles – usually tractors - and the Council provides whatever equipment is necessary to attach the ploughs.

Farmers that sign up to a Parish Response Scheme, whereby snow clearance is co-ordinated by parish councils, are provided with training by the County Council. The Council's own drivers are qualified in winter service operations.

The Council's own insurance covers all accidents and damage to the road surface.

## Renfrewshire

Renfrewshire Council occasionally uses commercial organisations to help clear snow. The vehicles used are conventional road gritters with ploughs, designed and constructed for this sole use; and JCB3X plant machines with the bucket replaced by ploughs. The JCB3X machines do not require permission under the Construction and Use Regulations.

One company that assists the Council, the Malcolm Group, advises that liability is covered in the first instance via the Council policies as they are working on their behalf. Their own insurance policies in respect of motor and road furniture damage also cover duties performed under Council direction.

Malcolm's drivers do not receive special training for snow clearing but all are certificated through the Construction Plant Competence Scheme (CPCS). This scheme is intended to help employers comply with regulations and requirements and applies common standards for all plant operators.

Details of the CPCS are available at <http://www.citb.co.uk/Cards-testing/Construction-Plant-Competence-Scheme-CPCS/about-cpcs/>

## Tesco

Tesco uses ploughs attached temporarily to their own vehicles to clear snow from their depots. They train their drivers in use of the equipment. Tesco's own insurance covers any liability from accidental damage, e.g. to a third party vehicle in their yard. Tesco's vehicles are used only on their own land and not on roads.

# Practical considerations

If you are considering attaching snow ploughs temporarily to your vehicles, you should consider the following issues:

## Insurance and liability

Operators will need to be sure that drivers and vehicles fitted with temporary snow ploughs are covered by insurance. Where someone other than a local authority clears snow from the public highway, they will need to agree liability for any damage to the road surface and furniture with the authority.

## Legal requirements

All vehicles used on the public roads in Great Britain must comply with insurance, licensing (tax) and registration requirements.

Vehicles operating on the public highway must run on duty paid fuel. Some vehicles are considered 'excepted' by HM Revenue and Customs and are permitted to operate using 'red' diesel which attracts a lower rate of duty. This includes tractors used for agricultural purposes. Tractors and other vehicles used for snow clearing on public roads, using a snow plough may also use 'red' diesel. Details are contained in HMRC's Notice 75

[http://customs.hmrc.gov.uk/channelsPortalWebApp/channelsPortalWebApp.portal?nfpb=true&pageLabel=pageVAT\\_ShowContent&id=HMCE\\_CL\\_000164&propertyType=document#P9\\_132](http://customs.hmrc.gov.uk/channelsPortalWebApp/channelsPortalWebApp.portal?nfpb=true&pageLabel=pageVAT_ShowContent&id=HMCE_CL_000164&propertyType=document#P9_132)

From 1 November 2013, agricultural tractors, light agricultural vehicles and agricultural material handlers used for gritting roads will also be permitted to operate on 'red' diesel'.

## Weights and dimensions

Vehicles must comply with the Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations (C&U). These requirements apply at all times where a vehicle is being used on a road - even in cases where road use is minimal.

Regulations 7 and 8 of C&U set out the maximum overall vehicle dimensions permitted and regulation 3 provides a definition of maximum overall length and maximum overall width. These definitions provide an exemption for snow ploughs in determining a vehicle's overall dimensions.

The regulations do not impose a maximum size limit for any snow plough that may be fitted. However, it may be appropriate to consider whether the size of any device or projections could be considered to breach the general safety provision within C&U which stipulates that: *a motor vehicle, every trailer drawn thereby and all parts and accessories of such vehicle and trailer shall at all times be in such condition ... that no danger is caused or is likely to be caused to any person in or on the vehicle or trailer or on a road* (Regulation 100).

You will need to consider whether the extra mass of the snowplough causes any maximum permitted weights to be exceeded – particularly with regard to any front axle limits.

## Traction

You should consider whether it would be appropriate to load the vehicle (with ballast weights for example) and / or fit winter/snow tyres to improve traction.

## Lighting

The vehicle must comply with the Road Vehicles Lighting Regulations 1989 (RVLR). If the snow plough obscures any of the obligatory lighting functions additional lamps should be fitted that fulfil the function. Additional front and rear position lamps and reflectors mounted within 400mm of the outer edge of the plough must also be fitted if those on the vehicle do not fulfil this requirement. (RVLR Regulation 21).

These requirements apply when the vehicle is used at night or in poor visibility, except requirements for direction indicators and stop lamps which must be met at all times. Amber warning beacons may be fitted to vehicles used for road clearance (RVLR Regulation 11) provided they are at least 1.2m from the ground, at least one is visible from any point around the vehicle and they flash at a constant rate of between 60 and 240 times per minute;

Additional retro-reflective markings may be fitted to make the vehicle more visible provided they show only red to the rear, amber to the side and colours other than red to the front;

## Mounting of plough

Make sure that the snowplough is securely mounted to the vehicle when in use and that any components that remain on the vehicle after its removal do not represent a danger to other road users (C&U regulation 100).

It is the responsibility of the driver of any vehicle to ensure they are complying with legislation when engaged in snow clearing.