

Lincoln Snow Plan

Let it snow!

Snow removal is delightful when weather is frightful

By Colleen Kenney
Staff Reporter

During last summer's heat, the Lincoln Public Works Department and the UNL grounds department began preparing for this winter's snow and ice.

As of Nov. 1, Lincoln was ready, said Darrell Derby, manager of Lincoln's snow removal. "We're prepared to handle a major storm right now," Derby said.

When the snow began, the work began. The first priority is to clear Lincoln's emergency snow routes. Lincoln clears all approaches around the UNL campus except R Street.

Lincoln's snow removal system has served as a model for other cities because of its efficiency, said Derby. The department has a budget of less than \$1 million a year, substantially lower than comparable cities, he said.

Despite a low budget, the department has new equipment. The department will use a newly installed IBM computer for scheduling.

"It becomes a very massive job to keep 160 to 175 pieces of machinery moving," he said. "This will help us tremendously in organizing the routes."

• Residence hall and student parking lots. Parking lots are hard to clear because of "working around the cars in the tight areas," Dasenbrock said. Although it is uncommon, sometimes machinery slips and damages a parked car.

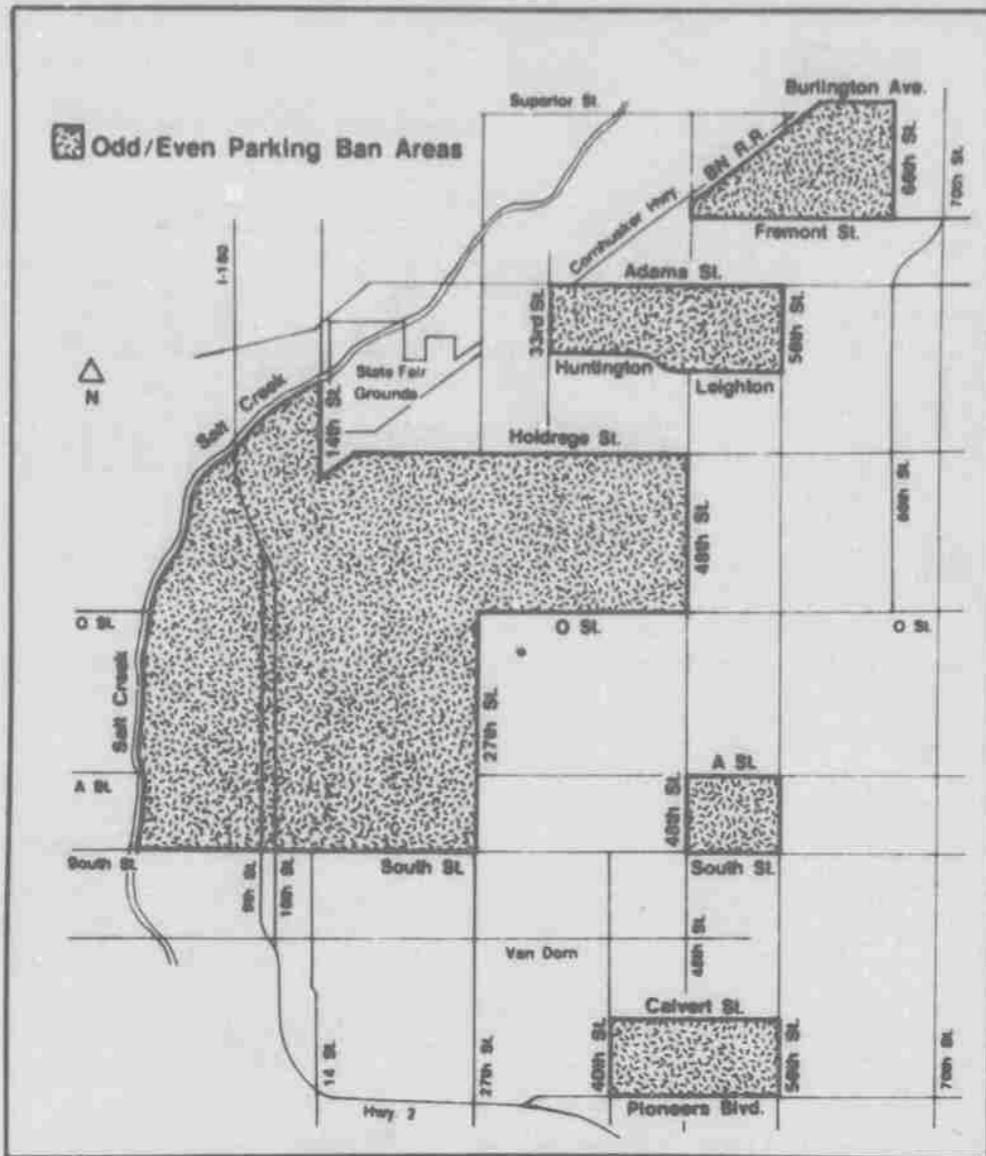
Drivers themselves can help avoid this. "We need cooperation from the students to move their cars before we clear their lots," he said. "Or it can really be a mess."

The Daily Nebraskan prints such a notice a few days in advance.

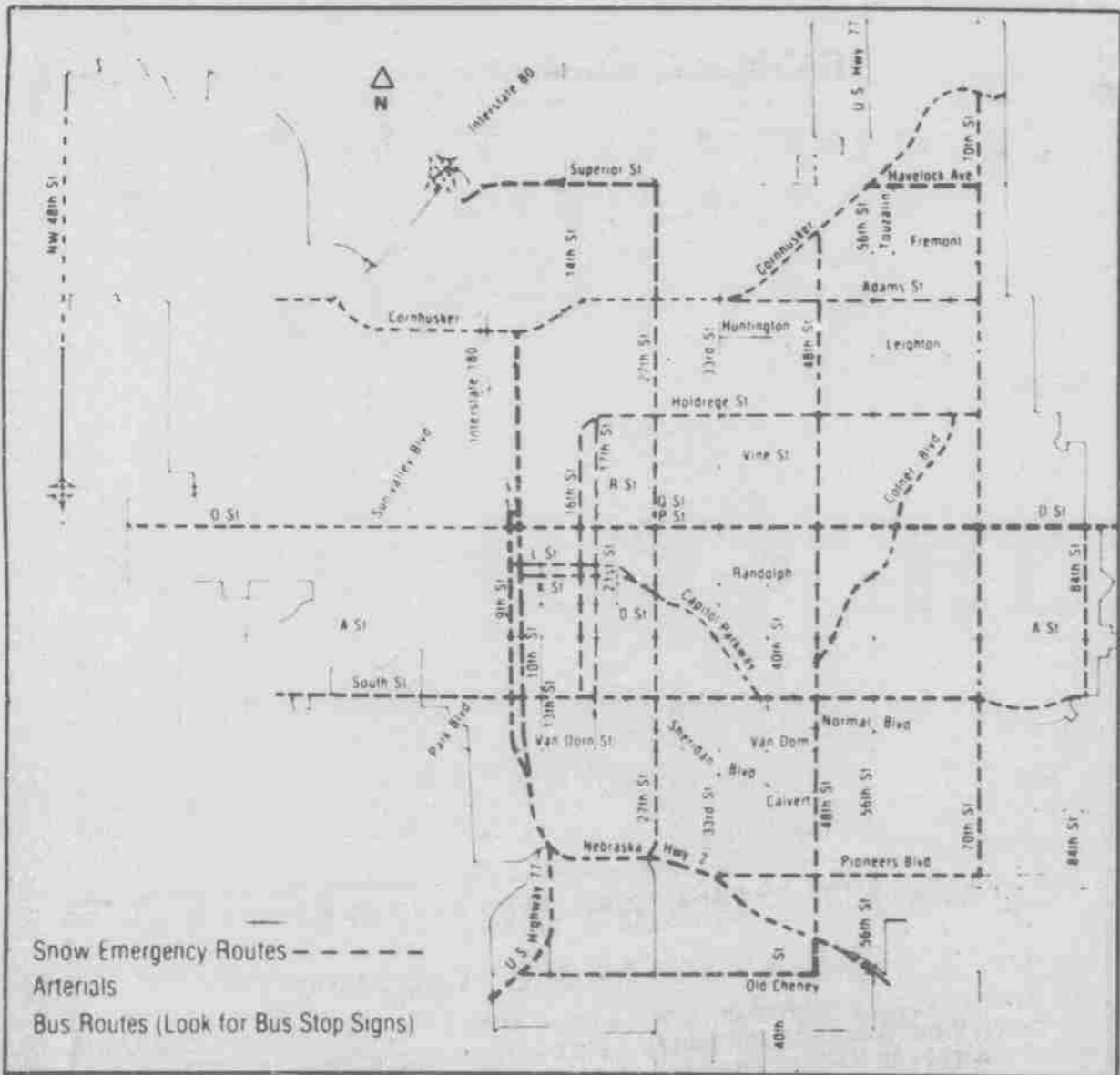
UNL students returned to Lincoln after Thanksgiving 1983 and a severe snow storm, to find many student parking lots inaccessible. Dasenbrock remembers the havoc it caused. Not enough parking lots had been cleared, causing UNL Chancellor Martin Massengale to call a "Parking Emergency," which allowed students to park anywhere they could.

Usually the parking lots and sidewalks are cleared before the traffic begins, but such an emergency is possible when the snowstorm is continuous and severe in accumulation, he said.

Residential Parking Ban



Snow Emergency Parking Restrictions



Other new city equipment includes two trucks, 11 snow plows, two snow spreaders and one front-end loader, all at a cost of about \$158,800. These join old equipment, such as 60 snow plows, 20 sand and salt spreaders, nine motor graders and four heavy-duty snowblowers.

Lincoln's snow removal operation employs about 400 people, officially. Still, the Public Works Department relies on contractual support from farmers and construction companies for extra workers and machinery.

UNL snow removal is on a smaller scale. About 42 full-time employees help clear snow. The department also relies on part-time student employees.

Bud Dasenbrock, director of the grounds department, said the employees usually clear UNL's 20 miles of sidewalks and 72 acres of parking lots in about four hours.

"It wears real fast on people," Dasenbrock said.

And unlike the Lincoln operation, the UNL department has "definite limitations" from a smaller budget and fewer resources, Dasenbrock said.

"We gear the best we can with the equipment and people that we work with," he said.

The department clears the campus in four stages:

- The area around UNL's power plant.
- Streets, lots and loading dock driveways for essential services.
- Administration parking lots.
- Large parking lots for employees and commuters.
- Small parking lots for employees and commuters.

To help alleviate parking problems in Lincoln, two ordinances on snow removal policies and procedures have been passed by the Lincoln City Council this year.

According to Derby, one ordinance requires an increase in fines for drivers who violate the snow emergency parking bans. The fine for parking on arterial, bus or emergency parking routes previously was \$25 and now will be \$35. The fine for parking on residential streets goes from \$10 to \$20.

The second ordinance will affect mainly residential streets. This ordinance gives the mayor authority to apply a ban on street parking in low-density residential areas during a snow emergency. High-density areas, which include the UNL campus, University Place, Havelock and College View, will continue with an alternate parking plan, allowing parking on one side of the street one day and on the other side the next day.

During a snow emergency, the following Emergency Snow Routes receive first priority for snow removal: O, Holdrege, 9th, 10th, 16th and 17th Streets.

Arterial routes not included in the Emergency Snow Routes receive second priority for clearing. Third is Lincoln Transportation System bus routes. Last is residential streets where the new parking bans will go into effect.

Derby, who also is snow removal operations manager, said the ordinances probably won't affect UNL's on-campus students. However, they might affect those students who live off campus in residential areas.

Anyone who has questions about the parking regulations can call 471-7644 from 7:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. for information. During snowstorms this number will be staffed 24 hours each day.

Officials give winter safety tips for Lincoln shovelers, drivers

The City of Lincoln suggests the following tips for winter storm safety:

- Lincoln has a law requiring sidewalks to be scooped full width by 9 a.m. following a storm. If your walk includes a wheelchair ramp, be sure to scoop that out, too. The city can clear unscooped walks and assess the cost to the property.
- For safety's sake, stay well behind sanders and snow plows, giving them plenty of room to operate.
- Don't become over-confident after a sander has covered a street. The street still may be slippery, especially at intersections.

It takes about three to nine times as far to stop a vehicle on ice or snow-packed streets as it does on-dry pavement. Adjust your following distance accordingly.

- Limit driving during severe weather. If you must drive, plan how you will reach your destination. Snow routes are plowed first, so traveling on other arterials and bus routes could be difficult. Snow routes are marked with special signs. Once these routes are cleared, other major streets and bus routes are plowed.
- Listen to the news for updates on snow removal operations. The time each parking ban will start is announced in advance.

The intensity of a winter storm will dictate which steps in Lincoln's snow removal plan are implemented. During inclement weather, you can keep informed on the status of snow removal operations or ask questions regarding snow removal efforts or parking bans by calling the Snow Center of the Lincoln Public Works Department at: 471-7644