

Winter Parking Policies for Snow Removal

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As part of Sightline Institute's research on cities that have removed off-street parking mandates, we compiled this list of on-street parking strategies used during snow events. Similar to how downtown Anchorage already restricts overnight parking during winter months, we found that other cities use seasonal parking restrictions, often implemented in multiple phases, plus robust communication tools to inform the public of parking news in a timely manner.

Buffalo, New York – Average annual snowfall 95 inches

Buffalo removed parking mandates citywide in 2017. To assist snow removal during winter months (November 15-April 1), Buffalo **prohibits overnight parking on city bus routes** and uses **alternate side parking** during the day¹. In 2020, Buffalo launched a text-notification program, "BuffAlert Parking Update," to give residents 24 hours' notice before alternate-side parking restrictions would be enforced after a snowstorm.² In the 2021-2022 winter season, Buffalo received 96" of snowfall, more than any other city in the US (Anchorage was #2 at 89").³

Minneapolis, Minnesota – Average annual snowfall 54 inches⁴

Minneapolis removed off-street parking mandates in 2021.⁵ When Minneapolis declares a snow emergency, it employs a **three-day plowing strategy**. On day one, it bans overnight parking on designated snow emergency routes, which are marked with "Snow Emergency Route" signs and blue street signs. On day two, it disallows parking on the even-numbered side of non-emergency streets. On day three, it disallows parking on the odd-numbered side of non-emergency streets. Once a street is fully plowed, people may legally park on it again.⁶

¹ City of Buffalo, "Parking Enforcement Division," www.buffalony.gov/485/Parking-Enforcement-Division, accessed November 4, 2022.

² Deidre Williams, "City of Buffalo unveils new tool to help residents navigate parking during snow events", *The Buffalo News*, November 30, 2020, buffalonews.com/news/buffalos-alternate-side-parking-rules-will-now-depend-on-the-weather-and-a-text-message/article_33849bea-3356-11eb-b966-63f7b9de5c3f.html

³ WGRZ Staff, "Buffalo ends the winter season as the snowiest city in America," *2WGRZ*, April 21, 2022, www.wgrz.com/article/weather/buffalo-will-likely-end-winter-as-snowiest-city-in-united-states/71-90d7fa8e-b11f-4f49-8884-27a229e3400d.

⁴ Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, "Minneapolis/St. Paul Climate Data," www.dnr.state.mn.us/climate/twin_cities/snowfall.html, accessed November 4, 2022.

⁵ Zoë Jackson, "Minneapolis City Council unanimously eliminates parking requirements," *Star Tribune*, May 14, 2021, www.startribune.com/minneapolis-city-council-unanimously-eliminates-parking-requirements/600057275/

⁶ City of Minneapolis, "Snow Emergency parking rules," www.minneapolismn.gov/getting-around/snow/snow-emergencies/snow-parking-rules, accessed November 4, 2022.

The city alerts residents via an emergency alert system, phone hotline, online map, and smartphone app.⁷

If snowbanks narrow roadways enough to impede emergency vehicles, Minneapolis may also enact winter parking rules that restrict parking to one side of the street only, similar to its day two snow emergency configuration. It used these rules in the winters of 2014 and 2019,⁸ lasting about a month each time.

Edmonton, Alberta – *Average annual snowfall 49 inches*⁹

Edmonton has the third-largest road network of Canadian cities¹⁰ and removed off-street parking mandates in 2020.¹¹ In October 2020, the city started implementing a **two-phase winter parking ban** to manage snow removal after major storms. First, it gives a minimum eight-hour notice of parking restrictions on Phase 1 streets—business districts, arterial roads, and bus routes marked with seasonal parking signage—lasting 48 hours. Then, if needed, it implements a secondary restriction on residential and industrial streets, lasting 72 hours. Last year, Phase 1 rules were used six times and Phase 2 only twice.

During a snow event, people can move their cars between Phase 1 and Phase 2 zones or use designated winter off-street parking areas. Once cleared, drivers may re-park on the street. Maps are available online.¹² This year, Edmonton launched a text and email notification service, and 10,000 people signed up within the first week.

⁷ City of Minneapolis, “Snow Emergency Updates,” at www.minneapolismn.gov/getting-around/snow/snow-emergencies/snow-updates/, accessed November 4, 2022.

⁸ Matt Sepic, “One-sided parking begins Wednesday in Minneapolis,” *MPRNews*, February 26, 2019, www.mprnews.org/story/2019/02/26/one-sided-parking-begins-wednesday-in-minneapolis.

⁹ Government of Canada, Canadian Climate Normals 1981–2010 Station Data, Edmonton City Center, climate.weather.gc.ca/climate_normals, accessed November 4, 2022.

¹⁰ City of Edmonton, “Winter Roads – Frequently Asked Questions,” www.edmonton.ca/transportation/on_your_streets/snow-faq, accessed November 4, 2022.

¹¹ City of Edmonton, “Open Option Parking,” www.edmonton.ca/city_government/urban_planning_and_design/comprehensive-parking-review, accessed November 4, 2022.

¹² City of Edmonton, “Winter Parking Bans,” www.edmonton.ca/transportation/on_your_streets/seasonal-parking-ban, accessed November 4, 2022.