

8 January 2010

New information in red

BRIEFING ON WINTER WEATHER 2010

Background

- Due to the unusually prolonged spell of cold weather from December 2009 into January, and the recent widespread snow, we are very closely monitoring the road salt stocks held by local authorities. The current cold spell is forecast to continue for the next 7 – 10 days, with further snow expected.

Key points as at **Friday 8 January**

- Ministers have today asked highway authorities to reduce their salt usage by 25% to help manage the exceptional pressure on salt supplies caused by the most prolonged spell of cold weather in the UK in almost 30 years. This reduction will apply equally to the Highways Agency, and councils. For councils, this will mean:
 - restricting treatment to published priority networks only, and in many cases
 - reducing treatment to a smaller resilience network should further reduction of networks treated become necessary;
 - where they have not already done so, reduce the rate of salt use in treatments;
 - for minor roads and where snow has already settled, use grit only, when resources permit; and
 - step up their commitment to provide mutual aid to neighbouring authorities
- A national approach will ensure that the responsibility for managing these reductions and bearing the disruptions is equally distributed. It is for councils to decide how best to implement these reductions in their own areas. A more planned approach will allow the salt supply to be stretched further and for contingency plans for public services to be implemented
- The CSS has provided advice to local authorities about how to reduce usage and prioritise existing stock. This document is available on the LGA website. <http://www.lga.gov.uk/lga/core/page.do?pagelId=1584235> and we and CSS will issue specific advice on how to implement the proposed 25% reduction in salt use.

Salt Cell and Salt Audits

- Salt Cell will continue to monitor salt supply and advise producers on the areas of greatest need for deliveries, bringing together central government, the LGA, Highways Agency, CSS, Transport for London, the devolved administrations and the Scottish Trunk Road agency – Transport for Scotland.
- Regional Resilience Teams (RRTs) are co-ordinating a twice weekly audit of salt stocks on Mondays and Thursdays to inform the advice issued by Salt Cell. Councils are urged to respond to this in full and on time, and to be prepared to respond to on-going requests for information, in order to assess the impact of the continued bad weather.

briefing

- Salt suppliers will notify councils of expected deliveries in the normal way. If councils have any questions about the prioritisation process, they should contact their RRT in the first instance.

Local authorities are working very hard on this issue

- Councils will continue to do everything they can to treat as many roads as possible but they will have to prioritise key roads rather than attempt to salt or grit all roads.
- An LGA analysis of council gritting activity over the last three weeks, since the cold snap started, estimated that:
 - The equivalent of 1.7 million miles of road have been gritted by council gritting teams
 - 200,000 tonnes of salt have been spread on the road
 - £12.2m has been spent treating the roads
 - 4,000 council staff have been involved in gritting operations around the clock
- Councils need to make sure that they are taking steps to preserve salt locally and keep salting coverage and intensity under close review.

Mutual Aid

- Local Authorities are encouraged to carry on with and where possible intensify mutual aid agreements, sharing stocks of salt. Local highways authorities should continue to identify opportunities for mutual aid on a local or regional basis. When other mutual aid routes have been exhausted, councils may liaise with the Highways Agency to enquire whether they are in a position to assist.
- Mutual aid guidance by LGA, Cabinet Office and SOLACE is available on the UK resilience website. www.ukresilience.gov.uk

Drivers' hours

- The Department for Transport has agreed to a temporary, and limited, emergency relaxation (not suspension) of the enforcement of EU drivers' hours and working-time rules for those hauliers involved in the distribution of road salt.
- This temporary relaxation applies immediately and will run until 23:59 Monday 11 January 2010 and will apply only to those drivers involved in the distribution of road salt.
- To view the full note please visit <http://www.lga.gov.uk/lga/core/page.do?pagelD=1596580>.

The LGA Group is supporting councils

- LGA is working very closely with central government and the Highways Agency to monitor the situation regarding salt levels and supplies.
- We have also been briefing journalists, MPs and opposition parties on the work that councils have been doing.
- Regular updates on the latest situation **and a Q & A** are available on the LGA website at www.lga.gov.uk/winterweather.
- LGA is ensuring a consistent message is conveyed on behalf of local councils, and will continue to ensure their needs are represented.

If you have any further enquiries please contact civil.contingencies@lga.gov.uk.