

Winter maintenance

The winter service plan operates between 1 October and 30 April. It sets out how Cormac delivers Cornwall Council's Winter Service Policy.

Where we salt

The plan sets out 25 pre-determined routes, covering over 1,421km (883 miles) of the road network. The routes cover all A and B roads and other roads with a high volume traffic, which account for around 80% of daily movements, and prioritises sites such as hospitals, and secondary schools. This is known as the precautionary salting network.

All routes are published online. You can track when and where Cormac plan to salt routes at www.cornwall.gov.uk/gritting

Roads that are not specified in the predetermined route plan are not routinely salted. However, in the event of snow, or extended icy periods, we will treat on a priority basis, after the main roads are cleared.

We will not routinely treat footways. When there is a significant risk of icy conditions for long periods we may salt busy footways in main towns, but only if it does not affect the treatment of the precautionary network.

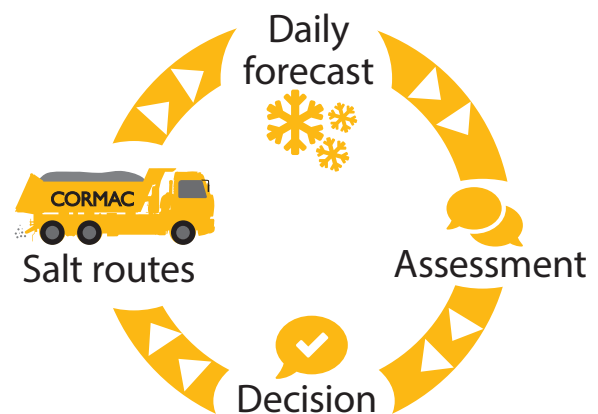
Please note the A30 from the boundary with Devon to Penzance and the A38, which are the main trunk roads through Cornwall, are the responsibility of Highways England which manages its own winter service.

How we decide which routes to treat

We receive a daily forecast from our weather specialists. The forecast is assessed, and action is agreed depending upon the time of freezing conditions and the areas affected.

By liaising closely with our weather forecasters, and reviewing readings which measure temperatures and other roadside factors such as precipitation, air temperature, dew point, and wind speed. Therefore from the 11 roadside sensors located across Cornwall, Cormac can assess when precautionary treatment may be required.

Based on all of the data and observations available, our experienced duty coordinators will make a decision on which routes will be treated and when.



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When all the instructions are in place, we fill and send the lorries out from our six gritting depots across Cornwall. Each gritter will usually complete its route within three hours. Our aim is to complete salting at least an hour before road surface temperatures are predicted to reach freezing point.

Our teams are on standby 24 hours a day, seven days a week – including Christmas Day - to enable them to respond to emergency situations at very short notice.

Our fleet of vehicles

We have a fleet of 28 gritting lorries - this season, there are 12 new lorries among the fleet, and they are all set and ready to go out any time day and night when conditions dictate.

When it snows heavily, snow ploughs are fitted to all gritters. However, snow ploughs don't clear all snow from the highway. Instead they operate approximately 50mm above the carriageway, to avoid damaging the road surface, road studs (cats-eyes) and the plough.

How does the salt work?

The salt doesn't melt snow or ice.

When mixed with water, salt lowers its freezing point. However, salt can take time to dissolve and requires some moisture to activate. Traffic passing over newly spread salt can break up the salt and assist the activation process. In dry conditions, it is possible for salt to lay on a surface and for ice to form around or on top of it.

Where salt has dissolved into the water, the chances of encountering layers of ice are far less likely. However, the possibility can never be removed altogether because:

- Sub-zero temperatures can reach the lowered freezing point required
- Salt can fail to dissolve properly in dry conditions
- Rainfall during or after the salting process can wash it away before it can take effect
- High winds can disperse the salt, reducing the effective coverage

While salt may help to speed up the thawing process, it will not prevent snow from sticking to the road surface. Where there is light snow on a road with a large volume of traffic, the action of tyres passing over it will create moisture and help the salt to work.

During prolonged periods of snowfall, snow will accumulate despite all the work we do in advance. Similarly, salt will not prevent the formation of ice immediately following a heavy hail downpour.

Salt stocks

Every year Cornwall Council pre-orders salt which is stored in six covered barns based in highways depots across Cornwall. We currently have around 15,000 tonnes of salt ready for use this winter and will, top this up during the winter months if required.

Salt bins

There are currently 488 salt bins across the county sited at locations not covered by the main salting routes, for example in villages or near schools etc.

We fill the bins once at the start of each winter. Subsequent top-ups can be provided at a cost and town and parish councils are encouraged to fund these where they consider them to be a priority in their community. Cornwall Council does not provide any new bins but town and parish councils can choose to fund these where appropriate.

How much does a grit bin cost?

Large grit bin (empty)	£189.38
Installed and filled	£205.49
Additional refills	£107.99

Should you wish to commission a salt bin to be refilled of salt bins during the winter season please email handew@cornacma.co.uk

Keeping up-to-date

You can find out the latest information by following @CornwallCouncil on Twitter for planned gritting activity and @CormaLtd for further operational updates.

And finally...

To report urgent emergencies of ice or snow on the road that is resulting in hazardous conditions, telephone 0300 1234 222 (24 hour service) giving details of the location.

We will assess the situation and send our teams to the places in most need when the precautionary network is clear and where resources allow.