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# Snow and Ice in Vienna

Information for property owners  
in Vienna

Stadt  
Wien

Abfallwirtschaft,  
Straßenreinigung  
und Fuhrpark

[abfall.wien.gv.at](http://abfall.wien.gv.at)



# Introduction

Winter weather comes with special challenges, all the more so in an urban environment. The Vienna City Administration has clear guidelines in place which detail who is responsible for what when conditions turn wintry.

Owners of property, be it plots of land or houses, have an important role to play when it comes to clearing snow and ice from pavements, and this folder provides a summary and concise presentation of the responsibilities this involves.

The Vienna City Administration is strict in monitoring compliance with these responsibilities, as safety in public spaces is accorded as much importance as the protection of the environment. Spreading salt, for instance, is strictly prohibited within a 10-metre radius around unprotected trees and green spaces.

The Vienna City Administration (Municipal Department 48) regularly gets top marks from Vienna's inhabitants for the winter service it provides. Let's all work together to keep it this way.



# Winter service – getting it right

## Here's the low-down in a nutshell:

- The responsibility for snow clearance and gritting on pavements and footways lies with the owners of the adjacent properties, while road operators are in charge of streets and roads.
- Snow clearance and gritting is mandatory **6 a.m. to 10 p.m.**
- **Clear snow and ice first before gritting.**
- When it comes to gritting, the rule of thumb is: **as much as necessary, as little as possible.**
- Using "salt" is prohibited within a **10-metre radius** around unprotected, unsealed ground, such as grass strips, or around trees.
- Where the pavement is wider than 1.5 metres, you only have to clear two thirds of it, but remember that 1.5 metres is the absolute minimum in such cases. One third is reserved for depositing snow.
- In the following cases, it is mandatory to clear the full width of the pavement:
  - where pavements are less than 1.5 metres wide
  - at junctions/intersections
  - at public transport stops
  - around pedestrian crossings
  - around disabled parking spaces
- Where there is **no pavement**, a path of at least 1 metre in width has to be cleared along the fronts of houses (also in pedestrian zones).
- In shared-space zones, the "pavement" area is visually separated from the "road" area, even if there is no level difference. The duties of property owners also apply to such pavement areas.
- It is prohibited to move snow from the pavement onto cycleways or roadways. Exception: where pavements are less than 1.5 metres wide, it is allowed to deposit snow in the parking lane.
- Where there is a risk of roof avalanches, the property owner must either clear the roof or have it cleared (for instance, by a roofer).
- Once the grit you spread is no longer needed on the ground to ensure public safety, it has to be removed (swept up) again.
- Remember that the Vienna City Administration has a strict enforcement policy.

# Snow clearance 101

## What to bear in mind

Between **6 a.m. and 10 p.m.**, you are required to clear footways, including any steps, of snow and to grit them if iced over – unless you have been officially exempted by Municipal Department 46. If this is the case, the fact has to be clearly indicated on site.

**Two thirds of the width of pavements and footways** have to be cleared. The snow must be deposited on the outermost edge of the footway and must not be moved onto cycleways or roadways. Entrances and driveways must likewise not be used to deposit snow. If a layer of slippery snow or ice remains **in place after clearing, such area must be gritted.**

Where the **pavement is less than 1.5 metres wide**, it is mandatory to clear and grit the **full width of the pavement**. In such a case, depositing snow in the parking lane is allowed to a limited extent, **provided that the flow of traffic is not obstructed.**

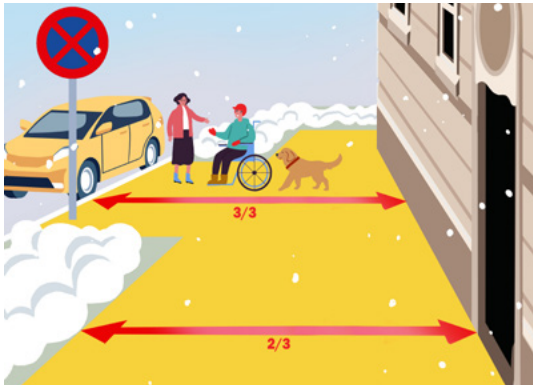
Around public transport stops, junctions/intersections, pedestrian crossings and disabled parking spaces, winter service obligations apply to the full width of the pavement. Depositing snow in the roadway is prohibited here without exception.

Where the only feature separating two properties is a footway, the area that is subject to winter service must be cleared from both sides, but starting from the middle of the footway towards the outer edge, ensuring that an **uninterrupted cleared path runs** down the centre. Entrances to properties and shops must be cleared and gritted as well.

To ensure the safety of members of the public, make sure to have snow drifts and ice forming on streetside roofs removed as quickly as possible. Dangerous areas must be blocked off or signposted accordingly.

## Be sure to take account of the visually impaired

Tactile guidance and audio signals at traffic lights are crucial in helping the visually impaired to get around safely. For this reason, it is necessary to include such areas in winter service operations. It is not allowed to let snow accumulate on signals with tactile signage or on tactile guidance features as this would make them unusable for those they are intended for. Accumulations of snow in the linear walking path must generally be avoided.



Two thirds of the width of pavements and footways must be cleared. The whole width of the pavement must be cleared where there is a disabled parking space.



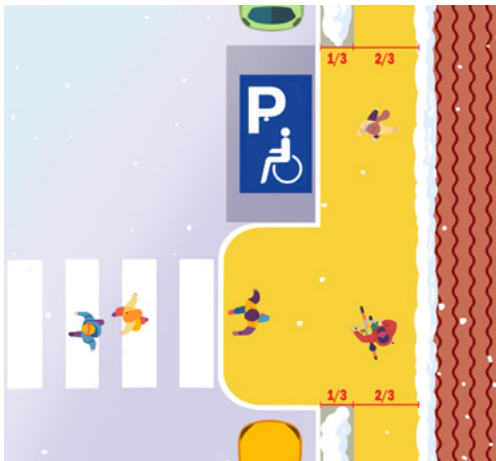
Snow must be deposited at the outermost edge of the footway and must not be moved onto the roadway or onto cycleways.

# Snow clearance on pavements

## What to bear in mind

Shared-space zones are usually divided into a “roadway” area and a “pavement” area, which are visually separated from one another (for example by a line of paving stones or a change in surface). For the “pavement” area directly adjacent to the front of a house, the obligations incumbent on the property owner under Section 93 of the Highway Code will apply even if this area is on the same level as the “roadway” area. Consequently, it is the responsibility of the property owner to clear and service this area.

The “roadway” area, on the other hand, falls within the responsibility of the Vienna City Administration, like all other roadways, and will benefit from the winter service provided by Municipal Department 48.



Where the pavement is built out into the parking lane, property owner obligations apply to the entire built-out part.

Where there is a handicapped parking space adjacent to the pavement, property owners must clear the full width of the pavement.

### Key

MA 48

Property owners



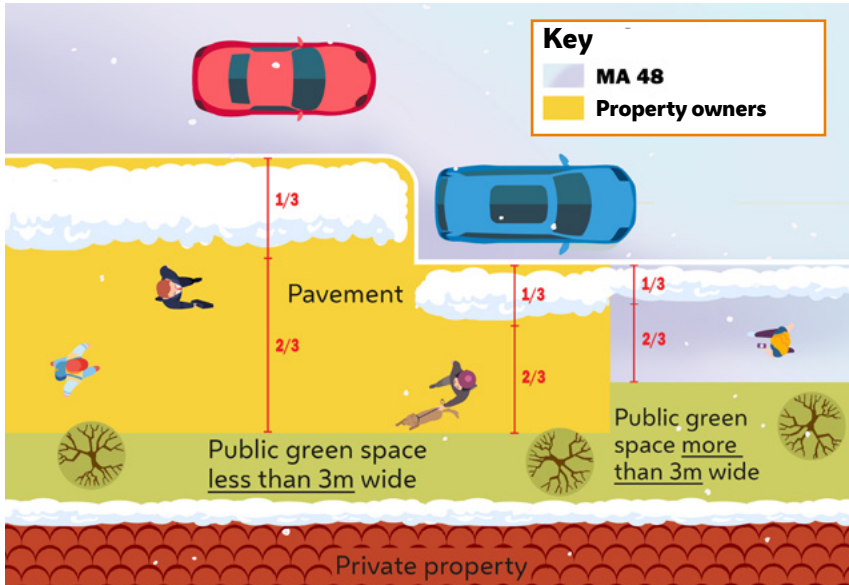
Around junctions/intersections and pedestrian crossings, the entire pavement must be cleared and gritted. Where the pavement is built out into the parking lane (bulb-outs), such areas must be serviced in full.

### Key

MA 48

Property owners





If the edge of the pavement closer to the property is at a distance of less than 3 metres from the property line, the property owners' obligations apply to the full width of the pavement.

If the distance from the pavement to the property line is more than 3 metres, property owners have no obligations to fulfil.

**BEAR IN MIND:**

If a snowplough moves snow back onto an already cleared section of pavement, the property owner will have to remove the snow again (decision handed down by the Supreme Administrative Court).



# Salt for de-icing

## Impact on the environment

De-icing agents prevent ice from forming on surfaces. The most well-known de-icing agent is usually just referred to as “salt”. The salt typically used for gritting consists at more than 95% of rock salt or table salt. If not eliminated by road drainage, the salt will seep into the ground along with the melted snow and ice, damaging trees and shrubs by extracting moisture.

**The rule of thumb to go by is the same as with all types of grit: Use only as much as is absolutely necessary.**

### Types of de-icing agents:

- Agents containing sodium or halides, such as sodium chloride ( $\text{NaCl}$ ), calcium chloride ( $\text{CaCl}_2$ ), magnesium chloride ( $\text{MgCl}_2$ ) and sodium acetate ( $\text{CH}_3\text{COONa}$ )
- Agents containing nitrogen, such as ammonium sulphate ( $(\text{NH}_4)_2\text{SO}_4$ ) and urea ( $\text{NH}_2\text{-CO-NH}_2$ )
- Other agents, such as potassium carbonate ( $\text{K}_2\text{CO}_3$ ), formiates



## Prohibited:

For environmental reasons, the use of **salt and/or other de-icing agents containing sodium or halides is prohibited** in Vienna **within a 10-metre radius** around “unsealed areas of ground that are not structurally separated” – for instance, grass strips or the bases of trees.

Exemptions, if any, are set out in the 2003 Vienna Winter Service Ordinance.

De-icing agents that contain nitrogen have major adverse impacts on the environment. They not only contaminate the water table, but also lead to overfertilisation of the soil. For this reason, Vienna has imposed a **general ban** on the use of **de-icing agents containing nitrogen**.

## Allowed:

Using de-icing agents containing sodium or halides outside a 10-metre zone around unsealed areas of ground, as well as any other de-icing agents, such as potassium carbonate or formiates.

## De-icing before snowfalls?

**Precautionary use** of de-icing agents in cases where precipitation has been forecast is subject to strict regulation: agents containing sodium or halides are prohibited, with the exception of pre-wetted salt. Pre-wetted salt is a mixture of a solid-state de-icing agent with a solution (brine) made from water and agents containing halides at a ratio of roughly 70:30.

### BEAR IN MIND:

In extremely icy conditions, the ban on the use of salt within a 10-metre radius around “unsealed areas of ground” may be lifted for specific districts or for the whole territory of Vienna. Please pay close attention to announcements made on TV and on the radio (Austrian Broadcasting Corporation or private stations).

# Crushed stone for gritting

## Impact on the environment

Usually referred to as “crushed stone”, there are various materials available that improve traction on pavements and roads.

However, dust pollution caused by crushed stone constitutes a major problem in terms of air quality and thus also for human health.

**The same rule of thumb as above applies here as well:  
Use only as much as is absolutely necessary.**

### Types of slippage-preventing grit:

- Different granularity stone materials (crushed stone)
- Artificial agents, including expanded clay, that are suitable to prevent slippage
- Combustion residues such as slag or ash

### Prohibited:

Using slag, ash, crushed quartz, quartz sand and recycled concrete chippings as grit is prohibited in Vienna.

### Allowed:

Any other type of slippage-preventing material not exceeding a grain size of between 2mm and 8mm. What is more, such material must have high abrasion resistance, have been washed, must be sharp-edged, low-dust and dry and must not contain any cohesive and greasy constituents. Recommended materials include crushed basalt and dolomite or expanded clay.

# Gritting before snowfalls?

**Precautionary use of slippage-preventing grit is strictly prohibited**

## Advice for dog owners:

While de-icing agents and slippage-preventing grit increase the safety of humans, they may cause wounds and stinging pain on dog paws. For this reason, you should put cream on your dog's paws before going for a walk and wash them upon returning home.



# What to do with grit after the snow has melted?

## What to bear in mind

Snow that has come into contact with salt must not be deposited on unsealed areas of ground, such as grassy spaces. Likewise, it is not allowed to sweep grit from one section of the pavement to another, onto the roadway, onto green spaces or into the street gutter.



Make sure to sweep up the grit that you applied.



It is not allowed to sweep grit from one section of the pavement to another, onto adjacent areas of ground or onto the roadway (street gutter).

## **Sweeping up is mandatory and subject to strict monitoring**

Once the grit is no longer necessary to ensure public safety (for instance, during spells of fair weather), crushed stone and other materials must be removed (swept up) again. The following applies: Pavements and footways must be cleared of crushed stone and other types of grit by the owner of the adjacent property. If a winter service provider has been contracted, such provider must proceed to clear it away.

Do not wait until spring to sweep up the grit you applied.

### **The Vienna City Administration is strict in monitoring compliance.**

Sweeping up the material as quickly as possible prevents particulate matter from forming.

Where property owners fail to comply with their obligation to remove grit, they must expect to foot the bill for someone else being contracted to do so, in addition to paying an administrative fine.

## **What to do with the crushed stone you spread?**

Small amounts can be disposed at the waste disposal sites operated by Municipal Department 48.

Large amounts have to be handled by authorised disposal companies.

**For information on waste disposal sites, see  
[abfall.wien.gv.at](http://abfall.wien.gv.at) or call +43 1 546 48.**

# Subcontracting to other natural or legal persons

## Subcontracting of winter service (snow clearing, gritting and grit removal)

- Where property owners take care of the winter service themselves, they are responsible for complying with the relevant rules and regulations.
- However, where property owners subcontract the winter service (snow clearing, gritting or grit removal) to another natural or legal person **IN FULL**, liability and accountability under administrative penal law will also be transferred to the respective contract partner.
- Such transfer applies also in cases where the contract partner employs subcontractors in turn.

## A transfer in full is deemed to apply if

- clearing, gritting or grit removal is agreed upon for an indefinite period of time or for a clearly defined period of time (for instance, the whole winter season), or
- a blanket agreement for the providing of winter service is entered to meet the obligation incumbent on property owners (under Section 93 of the Highway Code in conjunction with the 2003 Vienna Winter Service Ordinance).

**BEAR IN MIND:** In this context, make sure to watch out for clauses in the contractor's Terms and Conditions (T&Cs) that limit or exclude liability.



- The contract should clearly stipulate the applicable period of time (indefinite, limited) and the scope of services to be provided (for instance, all-out winter service, compliance with statutory provisions governing winter service).
- Where winter service is subcontracted not in full, but **ONLY IN PART** (for instance, one-off cleaning of public spaces at the end of the winter season), liability and accountability under administrative penal law will remain with the property owner.
- The contract must be presented at the request of the competent administrative authority (Municipal Department 58 – Water Rights is competent for handling administrative penal proceedings under the 2003 Vienna Winter Service Ordinance).



# Good for the environment



## Use salt and crushed stone sparingly

Salt and crushed stone have adverse effects on the environment. The rule of thumb is: as much as necessary, as little as possible.



## Remember to respect a "10-metre protection zone"

around unsealed areas of ground that are not structurally protected (for example, grassy spaces, trees, etc.). No salt must be spread within a 10-metre radius around unsealed soil.



## Sweep up and remove grit

Once the grit you applied is no longer needed on the ground to ensure public safety, it must be removed (swept up) again.

## **Further information:**

- Municipal Department 48 snow hotline: +43 1 546 48
- Vienna Parks and Gardens, plant protection: +43 1 4000 42485
- This information folder can be ordered free of charge in German, Turkish and Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian by calling the folder hotline at +43 1 4000 73420.
- You can download this folder and further information at: [umweltschutz.wien.at](http://umweltschutz.wien.at) or [abfall.wien.gv.at](http://abfall.wien.gv.at)
- Where appropriate, the Vienna City Administration will check whether banned types of grit have been used.

**As at 1 September 2022, this folder is based on the following statutory provisions:**

- 2003 Vienna Winter Service Ordinance
- Highway Code (StVO 1960, in particular Section 93, Section 99 (4))
- Vienna City Administration Ordinance on the Cleaning of Pavements, Footways and Steps

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Disclaimer: This folder on "Snow and Ice in Vienna" illustrates the requirements set out in the Vienna Winter Service Ordinance with regard to winter service in public spaces used by pedestrians. It is intended to provide merely initial guidance to persons interested in the subject matter. If you need more details, we would urge you to obtain further information and to familiarise yourself with all applicable statutory provisions.