

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

What is a Significant Weather Event? A significant weather event is an approaching or occurring weather hazard with the potential to pose a significant danger to users of the highways and roads within a municipality.

What is a Weather Hazard? Weather hazards are determined by Environment Canada as meeting the criteria for the issuance of an alert under its Public Weather Alerting Program.

Under what authority can a Significant Weather Event be declared? Section 16.9 of Ontario Regulation 239/02, being the Minimum Maintenance Standards for Municipal Highways, under the Municipal Act, 2001, as amended, gives municipalities the authority to declare a significant weather event when a weather hazard is approaching or occurring and has the potential to pose a significant danger to users of the highways and roads in which the municipality has authority over.

Why would a municipality declare a Significant Weather Event? When a municipality declares a significant weather event, the declaration suspends the standard timelines required for municipalities to meet their winter maintenance objectives until the municipality declares the significant weather event has ended. During the course of a declared significant weather event, the standard for addressing winter maintenance is to monitor the weather and to deploy resources to address the issue, starting from the time the municipality deems it appropriate to do so. When the municipality has declared the event has ended, the standard timelines for winter maintenance activities will resume.

Under what conditions would a municipality declare a Significant Weather Event? A municipality may declare a significant weather event when the weather forecast or actual weather condition includes one or more, but is not limited to one or more, of the following conditions:

- Environment Canada has issued an alert under its Public Weather Alerting Program;
- Significant snow accumulation during a 24-hour period;
- Ice formation that occurs with no warning from the weather forecast;
- High winds leading to large snow drifts;
- Cold temperature when de-icing operations will not be effective.

Does a declaration mean the municipality is reducing its level of service? No. A declaration of a significant weather event is not notice of a reduced level of service. The declaration is to notify the public that due to the current or forecasted conditions, caution is to be observed when travelling on the municipality's roads and sidewalks, and that it may take longer than usual to bring the condition of the roads and sidewalks back to optimal conditions.

Does a declaration mean the municipality is closing roads? No. A declaration of a significant weather event is not notice of a road closure. The declaration is to notify the public that due to the current or forecasted conditions, caution is to be observed when travelling on the municipality's roads and sidewalks, and that it may take longer than usual to bring the condition of the roads and sidewalks back to optimal conditions.

How will I know if the Town of Hearst has declared a Significant Weather Event? The Town of Hearst will notify the public of the declaration of a significant weather event by doing one or more of the following:

- By posting a media release under the "PRESS RELEASE" section of the Town's website, www.hearst.ca;
- By making an announcement on the Town's Facebook page;
- By issuing a media release to local radio, internet, newspaper, or television;
- By issuing a media release to local emergency services (police/fire/paramedics).

How will I know if the Town of Hearst has declared the end of a Significant Weather Event? The Town of Hearst will notify the public of the declaration of the end of a significant weather event by doing one or more of the following:

- By posting a media release under the "PRESS RELEASE" section of the Town's website, www.hearst.ca;
- By making an announcement on the Town's Facebook page;
- By issuing a media release to local radio, internet, newspaper, or television;
- By issuing a media release to local emergency services (police/fire/paramedics).

Further questions regarding the declaration of a Significant Weather Event, may be directed to: Luc Léonard, Director of Public Works and Engineering Services, 705-372-2807 leonard@hearst.ca.