

# Community Gritting Training Pack



For help, advice or further training  
on any aspect of this scheme, please  
contact

[highways@cambridgeshire.gov.uk](mailto:highways@cambridgeshire.gov.uk)

or call 0345 045 5212

## **Welcome to the Community Gritting Scheme**

Thank you for offering your time to help your community by gritting local footways. The County Council's Community Gritting scheme allows people like you to step in during extended periods of freezing weather to clear routes in your area that are not part of the County Council's gritting program.

This training pack contains all the information you need to become a fully trained Community Gritting volunteer. In order to complete your registration you will find a form to sign and return to the County Council at the end of this pack. However, if you are unsure about any element of this training, have any questions or would like more information, please contact [highways@cambridgeshire.gov.uk](mailto:highways@cambridgeshire.gov.uk)

## **How the scheme works**

### **When do I grit?**

Just like the gritters that clear the roads, the community gritting schedule is determined by the weather. We do not notify registered community gritting volunteers when to grit, we rely on our volunteers to grit the footpaths as and when it is required. Knowing when to grit can be determined by noting when:

- Snow or ice has formed;
- County Council Gritters are predicted to be operating on the highways (follow us on twitter or go to Cambridgeshire County Council's website);
- Local weather forecasts predicted ice/freezing temperatures.

### **Where do I grit?**

This scheme only applies to footways and footpaths. You are not insured or trained to grit the roads and should never place yourself in conflict with live traffic. You should not put yourself at any further risk from motor vehicles than you would as an untrained pedestrian.

Each parish decides which footways and paths should be gritted by volunteers and submits them to the County Council for approval. The routes are then discussed and an agreed route map is recorded. You are only covered by the County Council's insurance for these agreed routes.

If you feel that a route should be changed or added to the agreed route map then please contact your parish council who can discuss the change and submit it to the County Council if appropriate.

## **Recording your gritting**

It is very important that you keep a record of when and where you have gritted. These records evidence that a route was gritted by a volunteer so that any potential claim can be dealt with by the County Council's insurance.

As the County Council will only require these records if a problem arises, it is recommended that you arrange to pass these records to your parish clerk for safe keeping.

An example form for recording your gritting is provided with this pack, but you can record the information in whichever way is best for you and your parish clerk.

Only volunteers that have completed this training and returned the registration form you will be covered by the County Council's insurance. A person would not be considered a volunteer if the Parish Council pays them. Even if they are paid only a penny that person becomes their employee and they would need to obtain employers liability insurance.

Cambridgeshire County Council are only able to indemnify in respect of voluntary services for which the parish are providing a 'support' and would not be comfortable with payment being made.

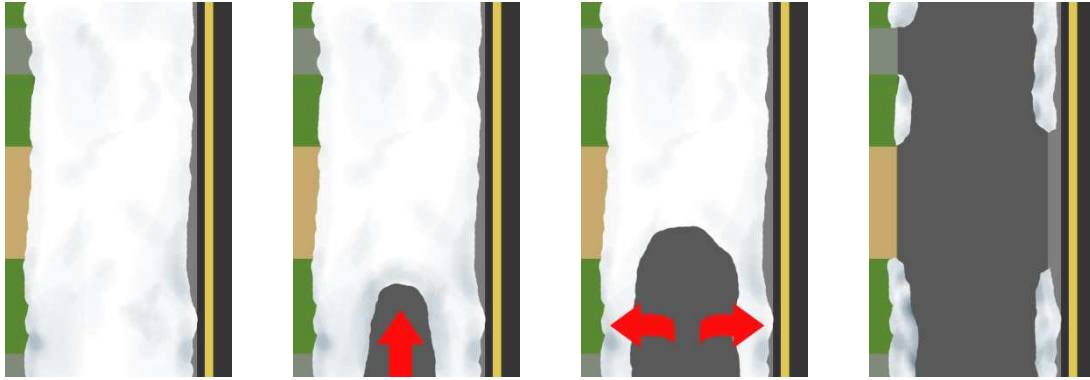
## **How do I grit?**

The grit that you will be using is the same substance used by the County Council's road gritters, a mixture of crushed sand, stone and rock salt. When it is spread on a road or path, the crushed sand and stone provide extra grip for shoes and tyres and the rock salt dissolves and raises the salinity of surface water, which lowers the temperature at which it will freeze.

A surprisingly thin layer of grit is needed to achieve this effect and our road gritters use as little as one tablespoon of grit per square metre when they go out. There is a limit to the amount of salt which water can absorb, which means that using a heavier layer of grit will not make the surface less likely to freeze.

Spreading grit will not clear heavy snow and if it is spread on snow that has been compacted, it may briefly melt a thin, top layer which will then refreeze and create a very slippery layer of ice. This means that it is very important to clear snow before you spread grit.

Using an appropriate shovel, start from the centre of the path, moving snow outward to the edge, taking care not to block driveways, dropped kerbs or drains. Even a small pile of snow can freeze into an icy 'speed bump' that will cause problems for pedestrians and vehicles.



Grit works best when spread onto an area where ice has already melted. You can use nature to your advantage by clearing snow early and timing your gritting after the sun has had time to act on the icy path beneath but before it sets and causes a drop in temperature that will start a new freeze.

This ideal scenario may not be possible, but for parishes who have a diverse range of volunteers you may be able to coordinate shifts that allow for clearing and gritting to be done by separate volunteers at different times of the day.

### **Operating a spreader**

There are two types of spreader that have been provided by the County Council, but both follow the same basic principle. Grit is loaded into a hopper at the top of the spreader and the motion of pushing the spreader turns a disc which releases a thin layer of grit onto the ground.

If grit has become damp and frozen, the large lumps may block the spreader, preventing grit from being spread. The County Council is looking into better storage methods to help prevent this from happening, but if this occurs, carefully break up the lumps to allow the grit to pass through normally.

Always make sure that the spreader is stationary and you have a firm footing before attempting to clear or refill the hopper. Never put your hands near the disc when it is in motion.

Fill the hopper carefully, making sure that you do not overload it by making the spreader too heavily to easily push and that you follow the lifting advice in the health and safety section below.

Ensure that the spreader is adjusted to the appropriate setting and make sure you have a firm footing. Then push the spreader at a slow walking pace, making sure that you take small steps, keeping the spreader a comfortable distance from you with your body weight centred above your feet. Moving too quickly or taking long steps will increase the chances of losing your footing or the spreader slipping out of your reach.

Ensure that salt is only spread on the footway or footpath on the agreed route and does not fall into nearby grass or gardens as it will harm the plants growing there.

If you would like a demonstration of how to use a spreader, have any questions or are unsure about these instructions, please speak to a fellow volunteer or contact [highways@cambridgeshire.gov.uk](mailto:highways@cambridgeshire.gov.uk) to ask for additional training.

## **Health and Safety**

The Health and Safety at work act of 1974 is the foundation of British Health and Safety Law. It imposes a duty of care on employees, including volunteers to take reasonable care of themselves and others while working and to co-operate with their employer to achieve this.

The information presented here is given to allow you to grit as safely as possible. If you have any concerns or questions, please contact [highways@cambridgeshire.gov.uk](mailto:highways@cambridgeshire.gov.uk) and remember, if it doesn't feel safe, don't do it!

## **Working around the highway**

This volunteer scheme provides for gritting of footways and footpaths and does not provide for gritting on the carriageway. You should not be any closer to moving traffic than you would be as an ordinary pedestrian and you should take extra care when crossing roads. Weather conditions will increase vehicle stopping distances and may reduce visibility.

## **Personal protective equipment (PPE)**

PPE is equipment or clothing which is intended to protect you against risks to your health and safety. You should always wear the appropriate PPE when gritting and make sure that it is in good repair and suitably stored when not in use. If any of your PPE is damaged or unsuitable, do not 'make do'. Make sure you inform your parish council that it needs replacing.

When gritting you should wear the following

- ◆ A high visibility Jacket or long sleeved waistcoat. This is bright, reflective clothing that will make it easier for drivers and other road users to see you and should be on top of any other clothing you are wearing at all times.
- ◆ Gloves. Aside from the cold, there is a risk of cuts or abrasions from grit. Always make sure you are wearing appropriately protective gloves
- ◆ Eye protection. Grit and salt water can be flung into the air, particularly when using a spreader. Keep your eyes protected from painful or damaging salt spray at all times.
- ◆ Appropriate footwear. A sturdy set of boots that support your ankles, are flat soled with good tread and have steel toecaps (not supplied by Cambridgeshire County Council).

## Manual Handling

Manual handling covers any transportation or supporting of a load (including pulling, pushing, carrying and moving) by hand or bodily force. You have a duty to ensure that you do not place yourself or others at risk by not following proper systems of work while acting as part of the scheme.

## Pushing spreaders

Ensure that you do not overfill the spreader so that it is too heavy to comfortably push. If you have overfilled by accident, remove the additional weight and do not put unnecessary strain on your body by trying to 'make do'.

Make sure you have a firm footing and are in control of the spreader by keeping your body weight about your feet, taking small steps and keeping to a slow walking pace.

## Clearing snow

Shovelling snow can be strenuous work that puts a strain on the heart and back. Make sure you stretch your muscles and warm up before you start.

Do not attempt to clear too much snow on each shovel-load and do not attempt to 'throw' the snow as this can cause jerky movements that increase the risk of strained muscles. It is better to work slowly and use more shovel movements than risk hurting yourself by hurrying.

Make sure you follow the proper form when shovelling:

- ◆ Keep your feet wide apart, with your front foot close to the lowered shovel
- ◆ Put your weight on your front foot, using the force of your leg to push the shovel forward
- ◆ Shift your weight to your rear foot as you lift the shovel, keeping the load close to your body
- ◆ Turn your feet in the direction you are depositing the snow as you unload the shovel

For further advice please refer to 'The Snow Code' at the following link:

<http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/get-ready-for-winter/out-and-about/the-snow-code>

## Lifting grit

Some grit may be delivered in small bags that can be lifted to pour grit into the spreader. When doing so make sure you plan the lift carefully:

- ◆ Adopt a stable position, feet apart with one leg slightly forward to maintain balance, with the load directly in front of you.
- ◆ Bend the hips and knees with a small flex of the back in a squat. Do not flex your back further than necessary.
- ◆ Take hold of the load and straighten up with your legs and hips. Move smoothly and do not jerk or snatch the load as this can cause injury. If the load is too heavy for this, do not lift.
- ◆ Only turn once you have completed lifting. Leaning sideways or twisting your back mid-lift puts additional strain on your back.
- ◆ Follow this procedure in reverse to safely lower the load again.



Remember, never lift more than can be easily managed and if in doubt, don't lift. Grit can always be shovelled into the hopper in smaller loads.

## **Slips and Trips**

The Health and Safety Executive states that slips and trips were the most common cause of accidents in the workplace and account for over a third of all reported injuries lasting over three days.

While gritting you may be working in a very slippery environment so remember to always wear the appropriate PPE, take your time and use small steps, ensuring that you take extra care around tightly compacted ice and uneven surfaces.

## **Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH)**

Substances can be harmful by inhalation, ingestion, eye injury or skin irritation. Although grit is not toxic it can be very abrasive and will be painful if it comes into contact with cuts, grazes or your eyes.

Always wear appropriate gloves when loading or using grit to protect your hands from abrasion, ensure that any broken skin is appropriately covered and wear eye protection to prevent injury from flying grit or salt spray.

## **Lone working**

Working alone can significantly increase work related risks, particularly at night, when you should ensure you stick to well lit areas whenever possible.

In an ideal scenario you should arrange to go gritting with another trained volunteer, both in appropriate PPE. However, as this is not always practical you should carry a mobile phone and use the 'buddy system'. Always make sure that you inform somebody (your buddy) that you are going out gritting and when you expect to return. Your buddy could be the parish clerk, a friend, family member or anyone else who you can easily contact.

Your buddy will be able to alert authorities or look for you if you do not return in good time and can contact you to check that you are alright if you are delayed. Please remember to contact your nominated 'buddy' when you have returned home safely or if you are going to take longer than expected.

## **Working in low temperatures**

Gritting and shovelling snow can be hard work which will warm you up once you start. However, due to the low temperatures you will be working at, you will very quickly cool down when you stop exerting yourself. Make sure you dress in layers so that you can add and remove clothing easily to adjust how warm you are. Always ensure that your high visibility jacket or vest is the top layer of clothing at all times.

If you dress appropriately, you should be relatively comfortable while carrying out gritting and it is unlikely that you will experience the following problems but please read the follow effects of being out in low temperatures and ensure that you take action if you feel any of the described symptoms.

## **Hypothermia**

Hypothermia is a condition that develops when the body temperature drops below 35 degrees centigrade. It is characterised by excessive shivering, confusion, slow movement or a stumbling pace.

If you start to experience any of these symptoms, stop gritting and find somewhere to warm up. Do not place yourself at risk by continuing to grit if you are feeling these effects.

## **Frostbite**

Frostbite is a more severe condition that results from exposure to prolonged or intense cold and affects the extremities of the body, particularly the fingers, toes or nose. It begins with a prickly pain, like intense pins and needles, followed by a gradual loss of feeling in the affected area. The skin then begins to feel hard, becoming a mottled blue or sometimes white colour and can eventually lead to the loss of the affected extremity.

If you start to feel the symptoms of frostbite, stop gritting immediately and find somewhere that is a comfortable temperature to slowly warm up at a natural pace. Never try to warm the affected area with a hot water bottle, bath or hot drink as this can cause permanent damage.

## **We are here to help**

If you have any questions about this training pack, want clarification on any of the points raised or would like face to face training at one of our highway depots, just contact [highways@cambridgeshire.gov.uk](mailto:highways@cambridgeshire.gov.uk) or call 0345 045 5212



Thank you for volunteering to help your parish this winter. This leaflet is a pocket guide to help ensure that you are safe and insured whilst gritting footpaths for your parish council. If you have not read the Community Gritting training pack and completed the registration form, you will not be covered by the County Council's insurance.

### **When and where should I grit?**

Knowing when to grit can be determined by noting when:

Snow or ice has formed;

County Council Gritters are predicted to be operating on the highways (follow us on twitter or go to Cambridgeshire County Council's website);

Local weather forecasts predicted ice/freezing temperatures.

The routes for gritting are agreed between your Town/Parish Council and Cambridgeshire County Council and it is important that you stick to these routes when gritting. If you feel that the routes need to be changed or added to, please let your Town/Parish clerk know.

*If you grit outside of the agreed routes you will not be covered by Cambridgeshire County Council's insurance.*

When you have been out, please make sure that you fill out a log sheet, with your name, date and route that you gritted and return these to your town/parish clerk. These logs ensure that Cambridgeshire County Council and your local clerk can deal with any enquiries about the volunteer gritting routes.

### **Good Gritting Checklist**

**Before going out**, make sure you have:

- Warm clothing
- Stout footwear with good grip
- A high visibility vest or jacket
- Gloves and eye protection
- A copy of the agreed route
- Gritting equipment that you are comfortable using
- Told someone that you are going gritting

**While gritting**, make sure that you:

- Check that it is safe to grit
  - Visibility is good
  - Traffic flows are not too high or fast
  - You are not at risk of falling
- Keep aware of traffic, which may have difficulty stopping
- Start by shovelling snow if necessary, starting from the middle

of the path, so you have a safe route to walk

- Make sure shovelled snow is not left in front of pedestrian crossings, driveways or other accesses to property.
- Use grit sparingly and check that your spreader is on the right setting
- DO NOT use hot water, which will melt the snow, but will freeze into more dangerous black ice
- Remove clothing layers if you get too warm, but always leave your high visibility jacket or vest on and remember that you will cool down quickly after you stop work

**When you have finished gritting**, make sure that you have:

- Emptied, cleaned and secured your equipment. Grit left in spreaders will solidify and become unusable.
- Told someone that you have returned safely from gritting
- Recorded your gritting on your log-sheet

Whenever possible, grit with a partner and keep a mobile phone on your person so that you can call for help if needed. However, if you do have a fall

*Try not to panic. It is likely that you will feel shocked and a bit shaken, but staying calm will help you to gather your thoughts and remember what to do.*

*When you are calm, ask yourself whether you feel able to get up. If you are not hurt and you feel strong enough to get up, follow the steps listed below.*

- *Do not get up quickly. Roll onto your hands and knees and look for a solid, stable object nearby.*
- *Crawl over to the object and, if possible, put something soft under your knees.*
- *Hold on to the object with both hands to support yourself.*
- *Place one foot flat on the floor, with your knee bent in front of your body.*
- *When you feel ready, slowly get up.*
- *Sit down and rest for a while before carrying on, if you feel able to do so.*

To update your contact details, log issues with gritting equipment, request more grit or for any other enquiries, please call

**0345 045 5212** or email

**highways@cambridgeshire.gov.uk**

Thank you for volunteering your time to help keep your parish moving this winter.

## **Community Gritting** **for Volunteers**



**A Pocket Guide**

## Community Gritting Volunteer Log Sheet

Parish:

Name of volunteer	Footpaths gritted (If all agreed footpaths shown on map, please write 'all agreed')	Date	Time out	Time back

## **Community Gritting Registration form**

Thank you for volunteering to help keep your parish gritted. Please complete this form and return to *Cambridgeshire County Council, Highways Depot, Station Road, Whittlesford CB2 4NL* or [highways@cambridgeshire.gov.uk](mailto:highways@cambridgeshire.gov.uk) to register as a Community Gritting volunteer.

**Name**.....

**Parish being supported**.....

**Date**.....

**Email address**.....

**I require the following equipment** (please tick all that apply):

PPE as described in the Community Gritting training:

- High visibility long sleeved waistcoat
- Gloves
- Eye protection
- A snow shovel
- A hand-pushed spreader

**Please collect equipment from nearest depot or provide delivery address below**

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- By ticking this box I confirm that I have read and understood the training in the Community Gritting Information Pack provided by Cambridgeshire County Council and will follow the guidance given.

The information provided on this form will be used solely for the purposes of administrating the Community Gritting scheme.