



FACT SHEET – Unsealed Roads

The Shire of York (The Shire) is responsible for approximately 467km of unsealed roads.

The condition of unsealed roads can change quickly, with the biggest contributing factors being weather conditions, traffic type, traffic volume and traffic speed. Unlike sealed roads, permanent speed limit signs are not used on unsealed roads because the condition of the roads cannot be assured, and vehicles must always be driven to suit the conditions.

Maintenance Grading

The Shire owns two graders which are used for maintenance grading and road construction work. Unsealed roads are maintained by periodic maintenance grading undertaken throughout the year. Some roads are graded more frequently than others depending on their classification in the Shire's Road Hierarchy Policy. The Shire's program is completed with two types of maintenance grades, being a Winter grade and Summer grade on formed gravel roads.

Winter Grading

The main purpose of winter maintenance grading is to provide a good running surface and to form cross-falls in the road by pulling gravel to the middle of the road, so that water can run off and not pool. Water pooling on roads causes potholes when vehicles drive through them. Rubber tyre rollers are used to compact the road during winter grades. Moisture is a critical component in maintenance grading so best results come when the surface is moist following light rainfall events.

Summer Grading

Summer maintenance grading is often done to remove corrugations and improve the running surface (by pushing gravel off the middle section of the road). Summer grading is often less effective due to there being less moisture in the gravel. Although water is sometimes added in the summer grading process using a water truck, hot weather affects the ability to achieve sufficient moisture levels. Insufficient moisture in the gravel loosens hard sections of the road which cannot be compacted with a roller until winter grading is done with the required moisture to achieve compaction.

Gravel Resheeting

Unsealed roads lose gravel over time and require new gravel to be brought in. This process is called "gravel resheeting", which involves placing additional gravel on top of the existing road surface. These works are planned within the Shire's Capital Works Program.

Requesting a Road to be Graded

The Shire has a Maintenance Grading Program, however, from time to time, a request to grade a road is received. When a request is received the road will be inspected and a risk assessment conducted. Once assessed the road will be scheduled for grading, in consideration of the Shire's Road Hierarchy Policy.

Asset Management Planning

To ensure the Shire is carrying out road works in a financially sustainable manner, the Shire has developed a Roads Asset Management Plan and several operational plans. These plans help determine the Shire's road priorities and works programs, including the regularity of grading and maintenance.

Changing Road Conditions

Over time, unsealed roads can become corrugated, potholed, rough, slippery, muddy and/or dusty. All of these are normal and unavoidable conditions that can often change quickly. Drivers must remain vigilant when driving on unsealed roads i.e. travel at lower speeds and expect the unexpected.

It is also important to note that road conditions can, and do, change after grading; unsealed roads are often more slippery after they've been graded than they were before grading. During dry periods, grading tends to spread loose gravel over the road and in wet conditions, (until the road surface has formed a dense crust), moisture can penetrate the gravel layer.

Road Closures due to wet weather

Wet weather can often pose a threat not only to the safety of road users, but the ongoing condition of an unsealed road. When an unsealed road is traversed by vehicles during a wet weather, this can cause the road to become slippery, cause rutting and damage the form of the road. During wet weather events the Shire may close unsealed roads for a period of time, to protect the road surface and to ensure the roads are safe for all road users.

What You Can Do to Help

1. Slow down.

Travelling quickly on unsealed roads causes more dust, more potholes and more corrugations.

2. Avoid heavy vehicle movements when it has been raining.

Roads are more vulnerable when saturated and heavy vehicles can cause significant damage to a wet road, especially one that has just been graded. In wet conditions, try to postpone truck and heavy machinery movements until the road has dried out.

3. Understand the nature of unsealed roads.

They will be rough and muddy or dusty at times; does the road really need grading now?

4. Drive to suit the conditions.

Drivers are responsible for their own safety and that of other users of the road. If a road is known to be rough or slippery, drive at an appropriate speed.

5. Expect the unexpected.

Never assume an unsealed road is going to be the same as it was the last time you drove on it, even if it is on the same day.



The Shire of York appreciates the cooperation of all road users.