

Living on an Unsealed Road

Waimakariri District has a large roading network, around a third of which is unsealed. Read on to find out more about how the Council maintains the unsealed network and what to expect on unsealed roads.

Maintaining our roads

There are approximately 570km of unsealed roads in the Waimakariri District. We spend approximately \$1.5m a year maintaining them.

This includes regular grading and the application of new metal to provide a good surface for traffic to run on.

Most of our unsealed roads carry fewer than 100 vehicles per day.

Dust

Dust and loose surface are a fact of life for metal roads. We can do little to combat this especially during hot summer days. Using oil as a dust suppressant is not permitted on unsealed roads.

Corrugations

Corrugations are one of the more annoying aspects of unsealed roads. They are generally caused through drivers accelerating or braking suddenly.

The Council's contractor can grade out some of the corrugations, but grading too deep can also affect the substructure of the road, allowing water to seep in, causing large potholes, soft areas and loose shingle.

Potholes

Potholes are more common in the damp weather where the road is flat, or there is a hollow or corrugation. Vehicle tyres splash the "fines" out and potholes develop.

The Council's contractor works within the available budget to keep roads shaped with a high camber to allow water to run off to the sides of the road.



Metalling

About 45,000m³ of metal is placed on selected roads each year. Roads with high traffic volumes can expect to be re-metalled every three years. It can be five years or more before roads with lower traffic volumes are re-metalled.

Maintenance grading

By their nature, unsealed roads cannot be kept in a steady state. Because they are made up of stones mixed with clay or silt fines, just how well they last between grading is very much dependent on the weather. Roads which carry heavy traffic such as logging trucks and milk tankers, can also suffer increased wear.

Different roads require grading at different frequencies dependent on their use and overall condition. Roads are assessed regularly and those with less traffic are graded less frequently and those with more traffic may require more frequent grading.

The road surface should remain in good condition for about a week and a half after grading, depending on weather conditions, traffic volumes and driver behaviour.

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There are certain times of the year when grading has the greatest benefit on unsealed roads. The best time to restore the shape of the road by heavy maintenance grading is when the road is damp as it will compact the road to a dense surface. Spring and autumn are ideal times. Grading in winter is avoided where possible as it invariably results in slushy conditions that are unsafe for motorists and take a long time to dry out. Grading in mid-summer is avoided as cutting into a dry hard surface leaves a layer of loose material that reduces to dust and can be blown away or get thrown off by traffic.

Monitoring and inspection

Unsealed roads are inspected regularly by Council staff, as well as the Council's Road Maintenance Contractor, to determine whether additional maintenance is required.

Corrugations caused by vehicles suddenly accelerating or braking will generally not result in extra grading, whereas corrugations caused by bad weather or heavy traffic may.

Priority is given to the existing maintenance programme and areas the Council has agreed require extra attention. Council staff monitor the contracts and audit the standard of work.

Contact our Customer Services on 0800 965 468 if you have a concern about the state of any unsealed road.

Driving safety

Three simple rules for driving on unsealed roads:

Accelerate slowly

Do not spin your wheels, especially through gear changes when entering onto metal roads from a driveway or another road. Ease off the accelerator where there are already corrugations.

Slow down

You will find less dust and less loose shingle. This will also help to reduce dust nuisance for adjacent residents.

Avoid hard braking

This will reduce potholes and intersection corrugations. Report any intentional damage to the Council or Police.

For more information please refer to:

Road Reserve Management Policy

waimakariri.govt.nz/__data/assets/pdf_file/0029/173981/QD-RDG-Policy-001-Road-Reserve-Management-Policy-102025.pdf



Find out more at waimakariri.govt.nz, or contact Customer Services on 0800 965 468.