

Town of New Hartford Highway Department Policy on Mail Box Damage

It is understood that mailboxes must be placed on the highway right-of-way; however, this does not grant people any legal rights in the highway when needed for highway purposes. According to New York State's Highway Law, when the necessities of keeping the highway open conflict with the reception of mail, the latter must stand aside. Under the law, a homeowner could even be required to remove the mailbox.

Regrettably, in extreme winter conditions, mailboxes can be damaged during snow removal because they are installed close to the road in the highway right-of-way as a courtesy to the US Postal Service. In most cases, damage to mailboxes is a result of the force of snow coming off a plow's blade. This scenario is dependent on weather conditions, amount of snowfall, and the weight of snow. At times, a Town or private contractor's plow will accidentally hit and damage a mailbox.

How can you determine how your mailbox was damaged? Typically, if a mailbox is pushed over and has no impact marks, it was probably knocked over by the weight of snow coming off a plow's blade. If the mailbox or post shows evidence of an impact, it may have been struck by a Town or private contractor plow blade or a passing vehicle. The angle at which a mailbox has fallen also helps to determine the source of damage.

If a Town of New Hartford plow directly hits and damages a mailbox, the Town will replace the mailbox with a standard issue black metal box and a single 4x4 post. The Town is not responsible for replacing designer boxes, post or any style of newspaper box. (If you have such a box, you may want to consider removing it for the winter months and replacing it with a standard box) Boxes need to be installed per US Post Office regulations. If a mailbox is damaged from snow coming off the plow blade, the Town will not replace the mailbox. If a private contractor plows your driveway, we recommend that you learn their policies regarding damage to your (or your neighbor's) property caused by their operators or equipment.

Mailboxes and posts are replaced only if hit by snowplow equipment, so check your mailbox, newspaper box and the supporting posts in the fall: perform the "shake test". If the post is already "shaky", chances are the post is unstable in the ground, and will not withstand the pressure of flying snow. Check your mailbox for loose or missing parts.

If you believe the Highway Department is responsible for damage to your mailbox, please call the Highway Department at 315 724-4300.