

BEST PRACTICES FOR SNOW AND ICE READINESS AND REMOVAL

Snow and ice hazards are among the leading causes of municipal slip-and-fall claims, auto accidents, and property damage during the winter months. Proactive planning reduces liability, protects employees and residents, and ensures operational continuity during severe weather.

READINESS BEST PRACTICES

Planning and Communication

- Develop or update written *Snow and Ice Response Plans* before the first storm
- Clearly assign responsibilities between the Department of Public Works, school building maintenance, and contracted vendors
- Establish communication protocols for closures, delays, and emergency response

Equipment and Supplies

- Inspect and service plows, sanders, salt spreaders, and snow blowers before winter
- Stockpile sand, salt, treated salt, and other de-icing materials in secure, accessible locations
- Ensure schools, government buildings, and fire and police stations have on-site shovels, ice melt, and mats for entrances

Training and Staffing

- Train staff on safe equipment operation, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) use, and proper shoveling and lifting techniques
- Provide refresher training on defensive driving for plow operators and first responders
- Schedule adequate staffing levels and backup coverage for extended events

REMOVAL BEST PRACTICES

Prioritization of Areas

- **School Personnel:** Prioritize bus loops, parent drop-off zones, sidewalks, and entrances to student activity areas
- **Public Works Personnel:** Maintain priority roadways, intersections, bridges, and municipal parking lots
- **General Government Personnel:** Focus on public entryways, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) ramps, and high-traffic sidewalks
- **Public Safety Personnel:** Maintain 24/7 access to fire and police bays, fire hydrants, and egress points

Documentation and Liability Protection

- Keep logs of storm events, treatment times, materials applied, and contractors dispatched
- Photograph high-risk areas before and after treatment for documentation
- Respond quickly to reports of icy or untreated conditions

Effective Removal and Treatment

- Remove snow promptly—push piles away from entrances, hydrants, and sightlines
- Apply salt and sand early and often to prevent ice from bonding to surfaces
- Reapply treatments during prolonged events and after refreeze periods

SAFE SNOW REMOVAL AND INJURY PREVENTION

Injury Prevention Best Practices

- Encourage team members to stay hydrated, and stretch before shoveling to warm up and prevent muscle strain

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- Use ergonomic shovels and push snow instead of lifting whenever possible
- Lift small amounts at a time, bend at the knees (not at the waist), and avoid twisting while throwing snow
- Take frequent breaks to reduce fatigue and the risk of sprains and strains
- Wear slip-resistant boots to maintain mobility and layered clothing to stay warm
- For larger areas, use mechanical snow blowers or plows to minimize manual labor and reduce injury risks

ADDITIONAL RISK CONTROLS

- Place walk-off mats and *Caution Wet Floor* signs at all entrances
- Inspect and clear roof drains, gutters, and overhangs to prevent falling ice
- Encourage employees and visitors to wear proper footwear
- Coordinate with local fire services to ensure hydrants remain accessible



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