

Snow and Ice Removal

Maintaining safe walkways at your business becomes a priority during inclement weather. Snow and ice removal is essential.

Failure to remove snow and ice at your place of business could result in a liability loss. While operating your business you must exercise a general duty of care to prevent injuries. Additionally your city may require you to clear adjacent walkways or property. Be sure to identify your responsibilities as an owner or tenant.

When snow is removed, it should be placed in an area that will not cause heavy water runoff when it melts. Runoff water can refreeze and create additional hazards on or adjacent to your property. Remove the snow and ice from the property whenever possible.

Just as you keep a sweep log, the snow and ice removal activity should be kept as well. Each time the activity is completed it should be documented for your records.

What is De-icing?

De-icing is defined as removal of snow, ice or frost from a surface. Anti-icing is understood to be the application of chemicals that not only de-ice, but also remain on a surface and continue to delay the reformation of ice for a certain period of time, or prevent adhesion of ice to make mechanical removal easier. De-icing after snow removal operations can melt most remaining snow and ice.

Most de-icing compounds are composed of salt, or halite (sodium chloride), but a number of different formulations are commercially available. Others, like potassium and magnesium chlorides – which melt ice through chlorine release – harm vegetation and pavement less than sodium chloride. Sodium chloride is caustic and can cause skin discomfort if it is handled with bare skin and hands are not washed soon afterward.

No matter what de-icing compound you use, three steps to follow in keeping an area free of ice are: (1) application, (2) ice removal and (3) reapplication.

(1) Apply your chosen de-icing compound to the icy areas of the walkway. The ice should begin to melt away quickly. Thin areas of ice or snow will disappear quickly. The thicker larger areas will require time and scraping to achieve removal.

(2) To maintain the sidewalks and lot, remove all ice and debris on a regular basis during the de-icing. Any small areas of ice or snow can still result in a slip and fall loss.

(3) Once you have removed all of the ice and snow, re-apply your de-icer to help prevent additional accumulation.

What Else Can You Do?

Pre-wetting is the process of spraying de-icing salt with a solution of liquid chemical before spreading the salt on road and walkway surfaces. When temperatures drop below freezing, there is no moisture on pavement and salt alone is ineffective.

Pre-wetting the surface, however, ensures that there will be enough moisture to facilitate the melting process. Pre-wetting helps salt work more effectively because it clings to the road instead of bouncing off. The result is that less salt is spread, saving money and minimizing the threat to the environment. As salt requires moisture to dissolve, it releases heat and thereby melts the ice and snow, as well as breaking the ice-pavement bond.

Whatever method and chemical you choose, it can help to reduce the possibility of a loss. Educate your managers and staff on the process to ensure proper operation and removal.