



Snow Removal Update

Background: *As we approach the winter season, it is important to remember that weather incidents have a major loss impact on the NJPHA-JIF, both through employee injuries and resident slips and falls. Pre-planning and executing the plan are critical to reduction of loss costs.*

Snow Shoveling:

- Cold weather puts an added strain on the heart. Unfamiliar exercise, such as shoveling snow can make other medical conditions worse. Stretch during and after working outside to help prevent injury and muscle strain.
- Keep dry. Change wet clothes frequently to prevent a loss of body heat. Wet clothing loses all of its insulating value and transmits heat rapidly. Bring a change of clothes with you on a snow day.
- Protect your lungs from extremely cold air by covering your mouth with a scarf when outdoors.
- Falling is the most common injury when removing snow and ice. Wear shoes with a good tread and layers of absorbing socks. Slip-on cleats (like Yaktrax®, or Stabilicers) can help employees navigate slippery surfaces more safely than boots alone.
- Separate your hands at least 12” on the shovel. By creating space between your hands, you can increase your leverage on the shovel.
- Lift with your legs, not your back. Make sure your knees are bending and straightening to lift the shovel instead of leaning forward and straightening with the back. Step toward the direction you are throwing the snow; don’t twist your torso.
- A blade full of snow can weigh 25 lb. or more; skim accumulations in 1”-2” layers.
- Push the snow. It is easier and better for your back to push the snow rather than lift it. Never throw snow over your shoulders.

Snow Throwers/Blowers

Injuries most frequently occurred when users tried to clear the auger / collector or discharge chute with their hands. The following tips can help prevent snow thrower injuries:

- Give all equipment a thorough check *before* bad weather hits. Make sure all guards are in place. Perform needed preventive maintenance, including changing spark plugs.
- Stop the engine and use a long stick to unclog wet snow and debris from the machine. Do not use your hands to unclog a snow thrower! Blocked auger/collectors and impellers can “spring back” when cleared and may cause personal injury, even with the engine stopped.
- Always keep hands and feet away from all moving parts.
- Never leave the machine running in an enclosed area, or unattended in any location.
- Add fuel to the tank outdoors before starting the machine; do not add gasoline to a running or hot engine. Always keep the gasoline can capped, and store gasoline outside of residential dwellings, and away from ignition sources.
- If you have an electric-powered snow thrower, be aware of where the power cord is at all times. Make sure you use a grounded extension cord, of a rating recommended by the manufacturer of the snow thrower.

- Caution employees using snow throwers to be aware of pedestrians who could be struck by the discharge. Objects other than snow will usually be thrown **farther** than the snow discharge, so be alert to where the discharge chute is directed.

Make sure that all employees are clear on these practices. Conduct a “tool box talk” on the subject if inclement weather threatens, and remind all employees throughout the snow emergency.

De-icing Materials:

After shoveling or using a snow blower to remove snow, there always seems to be a thin layer leftover that quickly turns to ice as it melts and is compacted by tires or feet. It can be removed by sprinkling it with ice-melting granules. Caution should be used in choosing a chemical, because some chemicals can be corrosive to such metal items as cars or can damage concrete. Following are primary chemicals found in most commercial de-icing products; read product labels carefully to determine content and check any warnings about use.

- **Sodium Chloride (rock salt).** This chemical is commonly used and is typically the least expensive de-icing material. It is effective down to about **5 degrees** and can be spread on top of ice and snow. It is not harmful to concrete but can corrode reinforcing steel. The salt is also more toxic to plants than some other products when it is washed into the soil.
- **Potassium Chloride** will melt ice at temperatures down to **10 degrees** and if used judiciously, will not harm vegetation. However, it can leave a white residue that may be tracked indoors and it can corrode metal.
- **Calcium Chloride** can melt ice down to **25 degrees below zero** but does not prevent refreezing. It is less harmful to plants and concrete if used sparingly, but can corrode metal and can leave a residue that will harm carpets, tile and shoes. It can also irritate eyes and skin.
- **Liquid potassium acetate** is a newer product effective to **15 degrees below zero** and can be applied with a garden sprayer *before* snow falls. It is biodegradable and listed as safe on vegetation and non-corrosive, however it can be costly.
- **Sand:** Sand is applied to provide traction for cars and pedestrians but it does not work well as a de-icer. It is often used as a compliment to de-icing materials.

Parking Lots / Sidewalks

- Shovel all sidewalks adjacent to your property to the bare pavement. This includes any sidewalks outside your fence lines and to the sides/rear of your property.
- Clear a path at least 36” wide (not just shovel width). This allows space wide enough for someone using wheelchair, walker or stroller.
- Strategically pile snow. Don’t create new problems in the street or sidewalk when clearing your property. Keep street storm drains clear of snow and report clogged drains. The snow will melt, and effective drainage protects streets from icing over and developing potholes.
- Chop or melt all ice. Ice is the primary cause of falls; it is not enough to simply remove the snow.

- Clear snow around any fire hydrants near your properties. Seconds count when a fire occurs and it is critical for firefighters to find and access hydrants.
- Shovel frequently. Do not wait until the snow piles up. Shovel intermittently after two (2) inches of snow has fallen to maintain safe conditions and prevent injury when clearing snow and ice.
- Maintain all parking lots free of puddling – water should drain easily. Areas that accumulate water in warm wet weather can become “ice-rinks” when freezing weather hits. Do not shovel snow into the street storm drains. Direct all downspouts so that water is not allowed to re-freeze on walkways.
- Maintain adequate lighting in parking areas, and on sidewalks. Replace burnt out bulbs promptly, and watch for instances where tree growth may be blocking light.
- Designate pedestrian crossing areas in parking lots and clearly identify speed bumps as well as curbs.
- Paint all car stops a contrasting color and allow them to be placed only on exterior edges of parking lots. No one should have to step over a car stop.
- Make sure you have handrails on all steps/stairs and ramps with three or more steps or a steep incline.
- **Use the attached log (or similar) to document your snow and ice removal activity.** This simple act can be invaluable in proving your efforts are recognized in defense of a claim.

If you have any questions or would like additional information, please contact your risk management consultant, or NJPHA-JIF safety director, Jim Rhoads at 610-397-5061 or by e-mail at james_rhoads@pmagroup.com.

IMPORTANT NOTICE - The information and suggestions presented by PMA Insurance Group in this risk control technical guide are for your consideration in your loss prevention efforts. They are not intended to be complete or definitive in identifying all hazards associated with your business, preventing workplace accidents, or complying with any safety related or other laws or regulations. You are encouraged to alter the information and suggestions to fit the specific hazards of your business and to have your legal counsel review all of your plans and company policies.

SALT/SWEEP LOG

Property: _____
(Name of location)

To be completed as needed during/following snow, sleet, or other conditions that may affect walking surfaces

Date d/m/y	Time Started	Time Completed	Weather Conditions	Specific Area	Work performed (shovel, sweep, salt)	Name of Person or crew completing work	General comments on conditions,

**Comments should focus on condition of premises after snow removal, also on complaints, accidents, or unusual circumstances.*

Signature: _____

Date signed: _____