



Snow and Ice Removal Program

Purpose

Slips, trips and falls during the winter months are a leading injury source for many. Schools and colleges may have increased exposure due to large parking lots, multiple sites, sidewalks, pathways, etc. A snow and ice removal program is designed to reduce the chance of injury to all individuals entering and exiting the facilities on your campus.

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Employee Responsibilities

- **Proper footwear:** Employees should wear appropriate winter footwear, such as boots with lug soles. Work shoes or dress shoes should be carried separately to the building. If employees are going to be walking on ice, consideration should be given to wearing ice cleats, which will provide even more traction than boots.
- **Watch where you are walking:** Taking extra time to watch where you are stepping will help you avoid slipping on a patch of snow or ice. Being attentive will alert you to potential hazards.
- **Walk slowly and deliberately:** Rushing or running decreases stability and increases the risk of falling.
- **Take the best route:** Follow the clearest route to your entrance, even if it is not the most direct. Obey signs that are posted and follow designated pathways. Avoid glazed ice areas.
- **Avoid carrying:** Keep your hands empty so that your arms are free to move for stabilization. Use rolling bags or backpacks if needed. Drop off loads near the door to avoid carrying long distances. If you must carry something, keep loads small and balanced. Be prepared to drop what you are carrying to avoid a fall.

School or College Responsibilities

- **Written program:** Write out the program and review/update it annually. The program should be posted or made available to all employees.
- **Resources:** Provide the financial, personnel and other resources required for an effective snow removal program.
- **Person(s) responsible:** Assign a person in charge of snow and ice removal. Assign at least two backup people for vacations and illnesses. Each person should be fully capable to fill in for those absent. Set up a way to notify backups on short notice. These people can monitor forecasts and temperatures, walking conditions, effectiveness of snow/ice removal, and should be equipped with a camera to photograph an area in question immediately after any slip/fall incident. If snow removal is contracted out, this person(s) should be designated to contact the snow removal company if needed or complete snow removal when contracted company is not on site.
- **Snow and ice removal personnel:** Assign or contract with people who are physically capable and knowledgeable about removing snow and ice. There should be enough people assigned to do an effective job. Assign backup personnel to account for vacations and illnesses.
- **Equipment:** Provide snow blowers, plows, shovels, scrapers, salt (or alternative), sand and all equipment necessary for employees to effectively control snow and ice. Provide carts, dollies, or other material handling equipment for transporting salt and heavy materials. Provide salt spreading devices for distributing salt. Provide signs and barriers to warn employees and to block areas unsafe for passage. Barrels containing salt or sand should be placed in strategic areas throughout the parking lot and walkways for people to utilize as needed.
- **Contractors:** Hire competent contractors who are reliable, experienced and knowledgeable. The same contractor should plow the sidewalks and parking areas to avoid split responsibility. Always have written contracts with the contractor, with your school named as an additional insured on the contractor's liability insurance policy. Also obtain certificates of workers' compensation insurance.
- **Inspections:** Conduct inspections regularly to monitor the effectiveness of contractors and employees responsible. Results of the inspections should be promptly reported to those with the authority to make improvements.
- **Monitor outdoor lighting:** In winter, outdoor lights are on for longer periods of time. Monitor outdoor lighting so that bulbs can be replaced quickly. Good lighting is important to make snow and ice hazards more noticeable.
- **Notifications and weather reports:** Develop a communication system to keep track of the weather and to notify those responsible for snow and ice removal. Weather radios for key personnel are always recommended.
- **Communicate with employees:** Use warning devices in the parking lots, such as flashing yellow lights or signs, to notify employees of unsafe conditions. Use signs at the exits to warn employees of conditions outside. Provide ongoing education and reminders for employees about hazards, ways to improve safety and proper footwear.

For more information on effective snow removal programs and more, visit UnitedHeartland.com/walksafe or contact your UH Loss Control representative today.

- **Barriers:** Use barriers to prevent employees from walking in areas that have not been cleared.
- **Wet floors:** Provide rugs, non-skid surfaces, and warning signs at walkways, steps and ramps indoors where water is tracked in. These areas should be monitored regularly and kept as clean and dry as possible. Rugs should be long enough so that when a person steps off of the rug, the floor remains dry (at least 10 to 12 walking steps).
- **Roof drainage and downspouts:** Make sure the drainage from roof downspouts is not directed toward walkways and the parking lot as the drainage can ice up and create a significant slip/fall hazard.

Effective Snow and Ice Removal

- **Frequency:** The bulk of snow and ice removal should take place prior to teachers, staff and students coming and going for the school day. Do not wait until the last minute. Removal must continue throughout the day if snow and ice continues to accumulate. Frequent removal of small amounts of snow is a better practice than waiting for an inch or more to accumulate.
- **Snow pile drifting and drainage:** If at all possible, pile snow to the east and/or south – this will help minimize drifting. However, piling should also take place where thaw run-off will not drain back onto areas where refreezing will present additional hazards. Snow piling also should be avoided in or near traffic areas or where pedestrians frequently walk.
- **Plow after hours:** Take advantage of hours when the parking lot is less full. This is when snow, ice, slush and frozen run-off should be removed. Good contractors are available during these after-hour periods.
- **Coordinate plowing and parking:** When possible, direct people to park in lots (or sections of lots) that have already been plowed. This leaves unplowed areas free for snow removal.
- **Provide designated paths in parking lots:** Clear paths in the parking lot for walking and mark them with signs or pylons. Parking lots are difficult to keep completely free of ice and snow due to their size. Designated paths are easier to maintain and provide a safe route, even if the majority of the lot is covered with ice and snow. Make sure that these pathways are cleared regularly and salt/sand is applied as needed.
- **Slush removal:** Take advantage of thawing periods and remove all melting snow and ice. This is often neglected and may not be automatically done if utilizing a contractor. Thawing snow and ice freeze at night to create a hazard in the morning.
- **Salt and sand:** Salt, sand and ice-melt materials should be used on areas that have been cleared of snow and ice. Have containers readily accessible for employees to throw salt/sand down. This practice slows down further accumulations, while sand provides some traction on ice.

