Slip and Fall Prevention: Snow and Ice Removal

A volunteer for the church slipped and fell on ice in the church parking lot. Injuries from this accident resulted in a broken ankle and a blood clot.

A pastor was leaving the church, slipped and fell on an ice-covered sidewalk, breaking his elbow in six places requiring extensive surgery.

Slips and falls at religious organizations from snow- and ice-covered walking surfaces are a common cause of injuries to religious organization employees, members and guests. Religious organizations are faced with the added exposure of people coming and always going during the day, seven days a week, increasing the need to monitor snow and ice conditions. To reduce the slip and fall exposures with snow and ice, formal procedures should be developed and followed.

Snow and Ice Removal Policies and Procedures

Some religious organizations may have only their employees and/or volunteers perform snow and ice removal. For religious organizations with large parking lots and extensive sidewalks, they may not have the resources to do this alone and will hire a contractor. Others may employ a combination of using their own staff and outside contractors. In any case, procedures should be put in place to address snow and ice removal, including the following:

- Designate someone to monitor snow and ice conditions. This individual will be responsible for coordinating snow and ice removal operations.
- During the months when snow and ice will be a concern, monitor weather reports daily. This will give you advanced warning of approaching weather.
- Snow and ice removal equipment should be available and ready to go, including shovels, ice melt, snow blowers, etc.
- Snow removal should occur when one inch or more of snow has fallen or if ice conditions are present.
- Walkways in front of entrances should have de-icing products applied.
- Snow and ice will melt, and water can accumulate inside the building at the entrances from foot traffic. These areas should be monitored closely for wet conditions. Make sure mats are in place and replaced if they become waterlogged. Consider providing additional ushers or volunteers to assist the elderly at the entrances.



This photo shows equipment and supplies that should be on hand to effectively handle snow and ice.

- Look for ice conditions that could develop on walking surfaces from runoff from roofs, downspouts and other areas.

- Isolate problem areas by closing them to the general public or install signs warning of the potential slip hazard. Make sure that by closing an area off, you are not redirecting foot traffic to other slip and trip hazards. (For example, re-routing sidewalk traffic that requires a user to step off the curb into a parking lot.)



The potential for a severe injury resulting from a slip and fall from the snow-covered steps and landing is high. This demonstrates the need to act quickly to remove snow and ice from walking surfaces.

Hiring a Contractor

If a contractor is used, the following guidelines should apply:

- The workload of the contractor should be considered. The contractor should not have too many jobs that they are unable to fulfill their responsibilities.
- The contractor should have the appropriate equipment required to adequately provide snow removal.
- The contractor should provide you with a certificate of insurance that names the religious organization as an additional insured under the contractor's insurance policy.
- A written contract should be used with a hold harmless/indemnification clause included.
- The areas of the religious organizations the contractor is responsible for should be documented (that is, front and rear parking lots, sidewalks, etc.).
- The contractor should have guidelines as to a maximum timeframe in which to complete the snow removal, such as after the precipitation has ended (for example, two hours) or the amount of snow that has accumulated (for example, more than one inch).



This photo illustrates how melting snow from a loading dock can cause ice conditions to develop on walking surfaces.

Snow and Ice Removal Log

A log documenting the steps taken to remove snow and ice can be a good defense to claims that the religious organization was negligent in snow or ice removal. Only adopt the use of a log, however, if your religious organization will consistently document all aspects of your snow and ice removal operations. The following is a sample log that can be used to document snow and ice removal.

Sample Snow and Ice Removal Log

Date: _____ Building Location:_____

Current Temperature: _____

Precipitation: ☐ Snow ☐ Sleet ☐ Freezing Rain ☐ Rain

Area	Type of Treatment						Time		
	Plow	Blow	Shovel	Salt	Sand	Anti-Icing Chemical	Time	a.m.	p.m.
Stairways/Steps	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐		☐	☐
Sidewalks/Walkways	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐		☐	☐
Entrances/Exits	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐		☐	☐
Ramps	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐		☐	☐
Parking Areas	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐		☐	☐
Other:_____	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐		☐	☐
Other:_____	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐		☐	☐

Person Completing Log:			Title:	
Start Time:		☐ a.m. ☐ p.m. .	Finish Time:	☐ a.m. ☐ p.m.
Comments:				

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