

RISK COMMUNIQUÉ

Snow Removal Policy for Schools

Once a school district has made the decision for school facilities to remain open during inclement weather, it is imperative that vehicle and pedestrian areas on the school property are cleared of ice and snow to help reduce the potential for slips, falls and vehicle accidents. Doing so involves both flexibility and planning so adequate resources are available prior to the arrival of students, staff and visitors. The following are some risk management considerations for school districts in the event of snow storms.

Contractor vs. In-house Staff

Many school districts use a combination of subcontractors and in-house staff to clear roads, parking areas and walking paths. One common scenario is for a subcontractor to plow large parking areas while custodial staff and buildings and grounds crew clear the walking areas. Select a subcontractor that has adequate resources to respond on a timely basis. Also, express the importance of the district being a priority client in order to receive the first (and sometimes repeated) efforts by the contractor to keep the areas clear. Some contracts contain terms that define who is responsible for requesting/authorizing the snow removal expenditure, who is responsible for accepting the request from the district, the estimated removal costs (fee schedule) based on the amount of snow removed and expected response times.

School District Policy

The school district may have a written policy that states the district will endeavor to remove snow and ice as reasonably as possible, depending on particular conditions at the time. There are many variables that impact the ability of the district to remove and maintain the areas surrounding the school including timing of the storm, temperatures, wind, drifting snow, sun, shaded areas, etc. Other areas to be addressed include:

Responsibilities

Define the roles and responsibilities of the custodial and buildings and grounds staff for each school and administrative building. A written procedure may establish how the district will attempt to reasonably remove snow and ice from sidewalks and parking lots. The procedure may define who is responsible for removing the snow from various areas such as custodians being responsible for most sidewalks adjacent to their building and maintenance responsible for removal in parking lots and outlying sidewalks. If administrative buildings do not have a day time custodian, special arrangements can be defined for such buildings. In order to lessen confusion about who is expected to perform the work, consider including snow removal duties on employee job descriptions.

Priority Areas

Clearly identify which schools and which areas at each school will be cleared first based on the flow of traffic and visitors to the school. The primary consideration is for the safety of drivers, buses and pedestrians who are accessing the main entrances to the buildings. Typically the schools that open the earliest are a high priority. Other considerations include enrollment size, special needs access, planned special events and the topography of the site and drainage of the specific facilities.

This is a sample guideline furnished to you by Glatfelter Public Practice. Your organization should review it and make the necessary modifications to meet the needs of your organization. The intent of this guideline is to assist you in reducing risk exposure to the public, personnel and property. For additional information on this topic, you may contact your GPP Risk Control Representative. www.GlatfelterPublicPractice.com

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Equipment

It may be important to address the types of equipment that is expected to be used and identify the staff positions responsible for maintaining and using the specific equipment in the procedure. Define where and when ice melt will be used (typically in high traffic areas).

Planning

Weather forecasts and district communications are important tools when planning for the availability of adequate staff and equipment. Flexibility in work schedules and the ability to approve overtime is important so that maximum staff effort can be available in advance of, during and after a snow storm.

Documentation

Consider establishing a policy where personnel document the time of each snow removal and placement of ice melt. Recording snow and ice removal efforts helps staff keep track of activities and also can allow for improved communication to staff coming in for the following work shift.