

Snow and Ice Clearance

Introduction

Messages around the subject of snow and ice clearance can be confusing and mixed.

However, the legislation is quite clear. Under the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992, we are expected to manage, so far as is reasonably practicable, the risks relating to slips, trips and falls from ice and snow within the boundaries of our premises. The same regulations also require that internal traffic routes are managed during adverse weather conditions.

N.B. Under most circumstances the Planning, Transportation and Highways Service is responsible for any clearance / gritting of public highways and pathways. If you are considering clearing public footpaths etc. adjacent to your premises, please seek further advice from the Highways Team and/or the Occupational Safety Team.

Risk assessment

All persons in control (Building Custodians / Head Teachers / Business Managers / Facilities Managers (as appropriate to their role)) should undertake and record a risk assessment that covers gritting and snow clearance within their premises. It is important that the assessment is clear, comprehensive and is communicated to all staff and others, where applicable. It must cover the risks associated with slips, trips and falls, but also the safety of staff who undertake the work (i.e. manual handling, safety of any equipment used).

The risk assessment must cover how risks associated with entering and leaving the building and movement around the building will be controlled. It should include a plan of the premises showing all routes which are to be cleared and treated. Consider colour coding the routes in levels of priority, e.g. red routes must be cleared and made safe by 8.30am. The route from the main site entrance to the main building entrance (about one metre wide) should be considered a top priority. In larger premises, routes between buildings should then be given priority if those buildings are to be used. Decisions on prioritisation of which routes should be cleared first should be based on the risk of slipping, tripping or falling.

All staff and visitors (including clients, contractors, pupils and parents) must be informed which entrances will be cleared in the event of snow and ice.

If the site is used by a number of different services, or by different services at different times of the day, there must be arrangements in place to ensure that the responsibility for clearing snow and ice is clearly set out and brought to the attention of all parties.

Snow fall or icy conditions

The Person in control of the premises should have regards to weather warnings / forecasts. In the event of snow fall or icy conditions, the person in control should discuss appropriate actions with site staff (or whoever carries out the work) to implement the controls detailed in

the risk assessment. This may need to be very early in the morning or at any point during the working day.

If a path is cleared it must be **maintained** in a safe condition. Therefore, it is important to realise the limitations of rock salt alone for certain paths (i.e. on a slope), and climatic conditions.

- Rock salt will melt snow and ice. However, the melting snow and ice can, on a slope, wash the salt away. In low temperatures, this can also result in the area freezing again.
- Rock salt and sand/grit is more likely to hold the salt on slopes. If the area does freeze again it has the advantage of leaving a residue, which provides a grip on surfaces.

Car park users should be warned of the hazards of ice and snow when using car parks that have not been cleared/treated. It may be possible / necessary (where time allows) in some premises to clear and treat a pedestrian route that leads from the car park to the building entrance. Arrangements should be made for vulnerable people and those with mobility difficulties to park as near as possible to a cleared path.

Where the person in charge of the site has concerns over the safety of certain site pathways, routes between classrooms, playgrounds, yards or other work areas, it may be appropriate for affected areas to be taken out of use. If areas are taken out of use, this should be marked clearly using signs/cones/tape to ensure everyone is made aware. In a school, if the playground remains in use, supervision levels may need to be increased. All staff should be aware of the risk assessment in place for snow and ice and take responsibility for following the designated paths and access routes when such conditions exist.

Internal routes

During adverse weather, the risks of slipping, tripping or falling on internal traffic routes are increased due to flooring becoming wet. This is made worse by snow coming in on people's footwear. Persons in control should carefully monitor the condition of internal floors, replace wet matting / use additional matting as necessary and consider whether additional mopping is required, particularly on or near steps and stairs.

Please follow this link for further guidance/advice from the Health and Safety Executive.

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/logistics/slips-trips-bad-weather.htm>