



# Preparing for Winter Weather: A Proactive Checklist of Action Items

Whether it's slip, trips and falls; facility issues such as frozen pipes, or vehicle safety, winter weather brings with it challenges that can range from the costly and inconvenient to the potentially tragic. And because our climate is changing, it can be hard to predict exactly when temperatures will begin to fall.

Below are a list of action items that your organization can complete before your typical first frost in order to ensure that your facilities and staff are prepared.

## Facility Conditions & Maintenance

- **Develop a Winter Maintenance Plan:** In order to coordinate your winterization efforts, develop a maintenance plan before the temperatures begin to decrease. This should include things like who is responsible for de-icing your outside areas, and who you will call in the event that you experience frozen pipes.
- **Create a Facility-Check Schedule:** Because ice and snow can melt and refreeze, it's necessary to perform spot checks and to reapply safety measures throughout the day. Before the winter days arrive, develop a plan for specific tasks that staff will need to do throughout the day, and who will be responsible for each. Build-in time for staff to take adequate breaks in order to warm up and rest, and make sure there are contingencies in place to account for staff turnover or sicknesses.
- **Create a System to Document all Maintenance:** Maintain an up-to-date and accurate log of all ice and snow removal efforts as well as facility checks that resulted in "no necessary action". This is essential to ensure consistent implementation of your maintenance plan. In the event of an incident, it will also help show that everything reasonably possible is being done to prevent incidents and injuries.
- **Check Facility Conditions:** Before any ice, snow or freezing temperatures arrive, check to make sure that all gutters, pipes and faucets are in good condition, cleaned, and repaired/replaced if need be, and identify any uneven surfaces where water may collect and freeze. This should include checking the physical conditions of locations where staff may be parking, collecting supplies or shoveling.

## Suppliers & Supplies

- **Identify Suppliers:** COVID has disrupted many different supply chains. This winter, that may mean that availability of salt and or deicer may be limited. Check with your suppliers early to ensure that you are able to get the supplies your organization needs.
- **Develop a Back-Up Supply Plan:** In the event that your supplier is backed-up, or they miss a shipment, have a back-up plan in place. Below are some suggestions:
  - Purchase sand as an alternative to salt/deicer
  - Purchase additional ergonomic shovels that reduce the strain on the back
  - Be prepared to delay the opening of your organization, or close your facilities, if you aren't able to properly de-ice your grounds
- **Use Comprehensive Contracts:** Having strong, comprehensive contracts in place with any companies that may be doing snow removal for your organization is extremely important. In

the event of an incident, that contract is going to determine who holds the bulk of liability. Look for companies and agreements that provide appropriate risk transfer/indemnification.

## Staff Training

Training your staff on your organization's winter protocols is necessary in keeping both them, and your members safe. Below are some suggested topics to train your staff on:

- **Policies & Procedures**
  - Train your staff on all of the policies and procedures that they must complete in the winter months.
  - Establish a defined process for monitoring and reporting severe winter weather, including who is responsible for initiating any emergency action plan.
  - If a winter weather storm were to approach your area, ensure that staff are aware of your emergency action plan.
- **Injury Prevention**
  - Train staff on how to report any unsafe conditions that they may see around your facilities. It's important to emphasize that this includes 'Staff Only' areas, not just those accessible to members and guests.
  - Provide staff with different precautions they can take to prevent cold-related injury and illness, including wearing appropriate clothing and shoes while outdoors.
- **Driving Safety**
  - Train staff on safe winter driving, and make sure that their training is specific to the types of vehicles they operate (e.g. bus, van, private car).
- **Program Safety**
  - In the event that winter weather disrupts your staff ratios, or prevents a parent from being at pick-up on time, train staff on how to adequately supervise all youth and maintain proper ratios—including modifying or canceling programs where necessary.