

Police Parking Lot Snow Removal Best Practices

Winter conditions create challenges for officers, police vehicles, and parking lots. Historically, towns have prioritized the snow and ice removal of school parking lots and town administrative buildings higher than those of police department and other public safety parking lots.

This prioritization has contributed to an increase of Workers' Compensation injuries associated with slips, trips and falls on snow and ice in police department parking lots. These types of accidents have accounted for 36% of the losses sustained by police officers during the months of January, February, November and December.

To help mitigate risks of falls on snow and ice by your staff and visitors on your premises, the town should review the existing snow and ice removal plans and prioritization program. Towns should ensure that adequate personnel, procedures, supplies and equipment are in place. Snow removal should focus on:

- Walkways.
- Parking areas.
- Entrances and other high foot traffic areas.
- Time of the public safety department's shift change, as this is when the greatest number of employees are at risk of slipping and falling; and
- Snow removal should be considered at several times during the day and night during snowstorms.

In addition to snow removal, care must be taken to ensure good walking conditions by proper salting and to mitigate slippery conditions from refreezing of melted snow and ice.

With any risk management initiative, proper planning should be conducted and implementation of a written plan that outlines the responsible person for coordination, and frequency and procedures for snow removal should be developed. This procedure should include:

- Procedures for moving vehicles to allow snow removal crews to safely clear the parking areas. This may include having to clear one area of the lot, then relocating vehicles to the cleared area, and then clearing the remaining sections of the parking lot.
- Incident reporting, including need for immediate medical assistance and claims notification, and accident review documentation.
- Establishing areas where additional sand/salt mixtures can be located.
- Monitoring of weather information and recording of pertinent data on snow removal log. The log should include details such as estimated snow accumulation, ice build-up, temperature, action taken (e.g. date and time contractor called, plow used, salt applied).
- Inspection notes and any unusual conditions.
- Posting of warnings in high-hazard areas. Remove or post warning signs of "hidden" hazards that could be inadvertently struck by cars or pedestrians if covered by snow (fire hydrants, curbs, grates and debris in walkway).
- Mitigating high piles of snow that can reduce visibility around corners.