

# Cool As Ice

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Tackle the upcoming snow and ice season without the stress of previous years

Grass stops growing, the temperatures start to drop, and you know snow and ice are right around the corner. There are not many other events that can halt your business like a snow event. It is imperative for your location to be fully cleared of all snow and ice to ensure proper operation of your facility, but also, to reduce liability.

When the first snow storm occurs, your day is spent fielding calls from employees and customers who are complaining about blocked parking spaces or slippery sidewalks and parking lots. Then finally spring comes, and you look back on the winter season and think to yourself, "I wish I would have known this. I wish I would have had a contract. Why did this snow season cost me so much, and what could I have done differently?"

Many do not properly prepare for upcoming snow events or even think about snow until they are already 5 inches deep. Being prepared and educated prior to snow season is the best thing you can do for your facility. Here's how you can better prepare for the upcoming snow season.

## Benefits of a Contract

You should always have a contract in place prior to the start of the snow season. The largest benefit is peace of mind!

With a contract in place, you know your location will be serviced throughout the entire winter, as well as through early spring storms. There is no last-minute scrambling to get a snow service provider set up with a contract during a snow storm. With contracts in place, your location will be serviced often, without having to lift a finger.

A contract allows for you to have a provider proactively placed in the event of a snow storm. The contract also protects you, your employees and your patrons regarding liabilities. A contract also allows for budget certainty. You have predetermined rates set forth in the contract, which we will touch on later.

If you decide against having a contract, vendors can simply decide not to service your facility, raise pricing or perform services that you do not want completed. Contracts hold your service provider accountable. Without a contract, you assume all liability and are responsible for any legal issues that may arise due to lack of service—for example, a slip and fall.

## Elements of a Contract

The important elements of a snow contract include the length of the contract, insurance requirements, termination, pricing and scope of work. Length of contract is determined by the customer and often ranges from one to three years. All contracts have insurance requirements with the required limits for policies. These insurance requirements often consist of general liability, automobile and worker's comp. Insurance coverage helps protect you, associates and customers. Each contract has termination clauses that allow for withdrawal from the contracts if services rendered are not satisfactory.

A detailed scope of work is essential and should include:

- Areas of responsibility: Are you responsible for the parking lots? Or just the sidewalks?
- A "trigger" snow depth: This is the snow depth that will trigger automatic dispatch. When snow reaches that depth, or begins to fall, this is when service begins. The depth can depend on your needs, but it is often 1 or 2 inches, or at the sign of the first flake.
- Chemicals: What chemicals do you want used on what surfaces? For example, rock salt or calcium?
- Miscellaneous: Other items covered in the scope of work include how to confirm services, approved snow-stacking areas, approval process for hauling snow off site, standard response times, approval process for pre/post treatments with de-icing agents, what equipment to be used on site and hours of operation.

## Determining Pricing

Most providers offer a variety of pricing models. The best one for you depends on how much snow your region normally experiences. We suggest that you work with your service provider to determine what model is best for you. Some of the most common pricing models are:

- Seasonal: Ideal for the clients whose locations see 50+ inches of snow every year. This allows for you to better control your costs and budget properly for the upcoming year, since your costs will not fluctuate based on frequency of in-scope services completed.
- Per event/per push: Ideal for areas that receives 20 inches or less of snow per season. This model only requires you to pay if there is an actual snow event.

- Time and material: Ideal for areas that receive little to no snow. You are only charged if there is snow, and you pay based on a pre-determined hourly labor rate and materials cost.

## Establishing Responsibilities

Knowing what elements of snow and ice removal you are responsible for at your location is one of the most integral factors when it comes to pricing your snow services. A blueprint-confirmed site plan and walkthrough with a facility or store manager prior to the season is important for both you and the snow vendor. These details ensure that your property is being serviced fully, with no questions about who is responsible for what.

## Emergency/Priority Plowing

Emergency response in the snow-removal industry is very different than in other industries. Generally, emergency plow response is within one hour. Priority plowing pertains to any location that is going to remain open during a weather event, which means they will have both employee and customer traffic throughout the storm. These sites are serviced first and are continuously monitored during and after a storm.

## Rooftop Snow Removal

Remember: Just because you cannot see it, does not mean it isn't there. Rooftop snow removal is often an item that goes overlooked until it becomes an issue. Snow melts and freezes, and then a new layer of snow falls. This process often repeats itself until the ice and snow become too heavy to be supported by the roof. This can lead to structural and property damage, which can result in injury. Most facility managers don't know they have an issue until their roof sags or leaks become visible.

If your HVAC equipment is on the roof, include a rooftop snow-removal program to ensure that the units can be properly serviced. Rooftop snow removal can be set up proactively as part of your contract or on an as-needed basis. A proactive approach is always best. Have your roof assessed prior to snow season and determine if there are any areas that should be repaired prior to snow fall. This will also allow you to have a better idea of how much snow your roof can withstand prior to placing a service call for rooftop snow removal.

## Products that Help

Proper matting inside entrances proves very beneficial during the snow season. High-quality,

durable and absorbent mats combat slippery, dangerous floors. Find mats with water-dam borders that can hold up to 1.5 gallons of water per square yard, trapping the water and keeping it off the floor. Mats absorb water and scrape dirt and debris from shoes. A normal carpet will absorb the water quickly and cause the floors to become wet and dirty. You can never fully guarantee that your floors will not become slick during a storm, but a high-quality matting system can greatly help.

Typically, your service providers will provide the store managers with a bucket of calcium or salt to combat snow buildup on the sidewalks. The store managers can apply these materials in between service events. However, note that sand is not suggested, as it can clog drains and cause massive clean-up bills the following season.

### Communication is Key

When facility managers have a vendor contracted for snow-removal services, they should tell their site managers to leave all snow-removal activities to the snow-removal vendors.

Ensure that your location managers have all phone numbers for their service providers. That way, in the event a service was not rendered or return service is needed, they can quickly request the service. It is also important to have an escalation process in place in the case of vendor failure.

When a snow provider calls to confirm service is completed to satisfaction, ensure the site managers check all areas of their responsibility. Often managers do not check receiving doors, docks or dumpster areas, and it's only when an incident occurs that they notice these areas were not serviced.

If you do not have a vendor contracted for snow services, it is imperative that your managers know what services they need for their location, and what areas need to be treated prior to the season. This way when they have a snow event, they know the details required to set up the service.

From a business perspective, weather can have a significant impact on the bottom line. In order to "weather the storm" during snow events, business owners, managers and staff should be prepared. Proactively setting up contracts and service can eliminate the last-minute crunch to find a service provider and ensures your restaurant is fully operational. Utilize your service partners to determine the best ways to ensure business is uninterrupted in a weather event. You want your employees and patrons to pull in to your parking lot and navigate to your restaurant doors with ease. While we cannot control Mother Nature, we can control how we respond to it.

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