

## Snow Removal Practices

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### Let It Snow?

Detailed statistics and winter weather model predictions suggest the upcoming 2013-2014 snow and ice season will aggressively strike the northern regions of the United States. Most restaurant facility managers plan for the winter season in the mid-summer months to avoid last-minute issues, while others do not make the proper arrangements, resulting in significant downtime or lost revenue during an already hectic time of year.

Exterior services management (ESM) companies are equipped with first-hand experience in managing all levels of snow and ice control. They will help your business avoid extended delays that impact your patrons' safety, your business hours and your overall expenditures. A seasoned ESM company can evaluate the property and quickly determine any problematic areas and ways to set up preventative maintenance tactics. As a facility manager and/or owner, you have to factor in the time it will take to recover the functionality and safety of your restaurant's operation.

### The Whole Story

In the grand scheme, snow and ice concealing storefronts and impeding the flow of traffic to your facility is just half the problem. Though a winter wonderland can be pleasing to the eye, minor to severe injuries are often caused by snow and ice. Teaming up with an ESM company that specializes in snow and ice management will reduce liability and, in the end, your bottom line.

An influx of snow and ice-related injuries can be prevented with the right preparation and execution plan. Exterior facility managers witness the many blunders of property managers neglecting to arrange pre-season property assessment, and depending on the severity of the snowfall, it should be a relatively quick process to restore business owners' facilities to their pre-winter state. Securing a plan for the most challenging season of the year can alleviate a line of unnecessary liabilities.

### Snow and Ice Removal 101

Your business can still reap the benefits of a beautiful winter season, while maintaining a fully operational restaurant. Here are four general practices to snow and ice removal:

- 1) Plowing is the most important response in snow removal and is used in almost all snow and ice removal strategies. Advances in snowplow technology have reduced the amount of energy needed to remove snow and ice. Most contractors use the same basic type of equipment: dump trucks with plows, rotary plows and front-end loaders.
- 2) De-icing is a reactive snow and ice control strategy that seeks to break the bond between snow and ice and the pavement, using chemical and mechanical means. This traditional strategy is widely used today. Using the deicing approach, chemicals are applied during or after a winter storm when snow or ice has already bonded to the pavement. The chemicals melt channels through the snow and ice to the pavement. A thin layer of the chemical solution spreads at the interface between the ice and pavement, and the ice/pavement bond is eventually weakened so that it can be mechanically removed.
- 3) Anti-icing is the practice of preventing the formation or development of bonded snow and ice by the timely application of a chemical freeze-point depressant. Lately, facility managers appear to be shifting toward anti-icing strategies, which are considered more cost effective than traditional methods.
- 4) Lastly, pre-wetting is an innovative strategy that is becoming more popular. This involves solid chemicals that are coated with a liquid prior to being spread on pavement. Prewetted solid chemicals are used in both anti-icing and deicing strategies. Prewetting accelerates the deicing process and reduces bounce and scatter because more chemicals adhere better to the road's surface.

### Your Action Plan

Now that you are more familiar with the basic practices of snow removal, here is a plan of execution for dealing with snow and ice that can effectively reduce risk to your restaurant's winter operations:

- 1) Plan ahead. As a facility manager and/or owner, you must consider your employees as well as your business. Therefore, it is imperative to plan ahead to minimize downtime for your patrons and employees.
- 2) Prepare a clean list. This is an inventory of all the moving parts you are responsible for on the restaurant's property.
- 3) Inventory exterior assets. Consider landscapes, turf areas, sidewalks, parking lots and exterior objects that may need maintenance. List the most used entrances and exits of your facility—those are the areas that will need to be tended to first, once a pathway has been cleared.
- 4) Take photos. Visually documenting your exterior assets is very important in the inventory process and will significantly help with the snow and ice removal implementation plan. It's also a good practice for managing wear and tear on the property's exterior structure.
- 5) Track weather conditions. The climate and weather are two different things. The climate is a forecast—sometimes accurate and sometimes not—but the weather is the current state of the temperature and atmosphere. By tracking the weather in advance, you can take the necessary preventative measures to ensure safety. Once the snow and ice descend, you will be ready to respond.

### Next Steps

Once all safety measures have been implemented and a consistent schedule of daily maintenance is in effect, you can start to relax and confidently know that you will be able to tackle the most daunting weather conditions. After dealing with the more perilous winter problems, thinking about the appearance of your exterior should be the next priority. Many business owners are weatherizing their facilities to keep their customers warm and to save on variable and power expenses; think about winterizing the exteriors of your property.

Prior to the winter season, fertilize your planting beds and trees. Trim and groom, and resist using the irrigation system on any ornamental grass. Like many things in life, your ornamental grass has the will to survive. Every time you trim it, it grows back faster than when you neglected it. Even in mild winters, and though the will is still there, your ornamental grass can be the first to go if precautions are not taken. Reduce the shock of winter by cutting your grass to the base before the white stuff falls.

A professional ESM company can handle all of the details of pre-season preparations, after-storm restoration and the daily maintenance of winter. An ESM company will consider factors such as performance, cost, availability, ease of use, corrosion impacts, environmental impacts and health effects of your business. Therefore, it is very important for business owners to research and reserve an organized, cost-efficient and experienced ESM company. Though winter is the most taxing in terms of weather, all seasons should be recognized with equal amounts of attention.

Whether you are planning for winter, spring, summer or fall, your business should always seem unaffected by seasonal woes or aesthetically unappealing effects. Instead, plan on seasonally enhancing your business accordingly—not just on the inside, but on the outside as well.