

## Snow and Ice for Everyone-Nice!

Challenging weather is again on our schedule for the New Year of 2010. The time to prepare for winter weather across the country is now. Before we actually experience the first major snow and ice storm ask yourself this key question. What is your maintenance department's PLAN for keeping your sidewalks, parking lots and driveways clear? Your plan should include:

- Inspect all the various snow and ice removal equipment used at your site. Be prepared for any weather.
- Advise and train all members of your maintenance department on how to use all your snow removal equipment in a safe, knowledgeable manner.
- Estimate the amount salt or other ice melting products you will require for your property. Order what will be required for the normal season and then store it safely on your site.
- Decide what specific weather conditions must exist to trigger the plowing and salting at your unique property. Your management team should develop written procedures to be available on site for everyone to review and follow.
- Discuss the areas to be plowed by your team or independent contractor to ensure what critical areas should be completed first, where the removed snow should be stored on site; and develop a direct line of communication from the contractor and your valued maintenance staff.

- Coordinate how your maintenance department will clean the sidewalks and interface with the residents on site.
- Keep an accurate log of all activities by both the outside contractor and your own maintenance department.

Proper planning and execution will always provide an opportunity to reduce the slip and fall hazards at your property. Equipment that has been stored all summer needs to be inspected and made ready for the cold weather conditions at each property. Each maintenance employee should be given proper training on the operation of all snow removal equipment to reduce their vulnerability hazards and potential accidents. Snow throwers, salt spreaders, shovels and other snow/ice removal equipment are included in this process. Avoid throwing salt and other debris in the direction of cars and people passing by in this area.

Storage of salt or other chemical agents should be accomplished so maintenance can pick up the bags of salt with a minimum of stress on their backs. Use 40lb-50lb bags rather than 80lb-100lb bags of salt. Do not stack them higher than shoulder level of the shortest person handling the bags. Store the bags on several empty pallets where possible to reduce the possibility of lifting injury. Keep the area neat and clean.

When to initiate the snow and ice removal at each site should be determined long before the first large storm of the season. Contractors will usually perform their work when management is not on site and they need to make the appropriate entries to the property snow logs. How much snow was removed and how much salt was used are generally the two areas of concern. The removal and storage of snow are also important when keeping clear access to parking and storage areas, various pedestrian patterns and ingress and egress from each building on site.

Awareness and training for employees and residents who are performing snow removal activities are important. Proper lifting education, knowledge of cold weather hazards such as frostbite and over exposure should be included. Special attention for tenants with specific disabilities or challenges should be the rule rather than the exception. Adequate cold weather clothing as well as proper training and supervision for employees operating equipment is the recommended process to follow on site. Remember to wear eye protection while operating snow blowers or other commercial snow removal equipment. Begin slowly, taking breaks about every 20 minutes and always keep your feet and hands dry and warm during the entire process.

Maintenance teams should also check gutters, downspouts and drains on a regular basis. In so many cases a simple problem with a gutter pulled away from the roof line for a short period of time could result in serious patches of ice allowed to accumulate on adjacent sidewalks and walkways.

Coach your maintenance and management staff must work as a team to ensure clear access for all tenants and visitors alike. Each winter storm including snow and ice will test our employees and contractors alike. If the snow and ice are removed and stored quickly and efficiently your property will have lessened the opportunity for a fall and injury at your site. Is your plan up to the challenge?