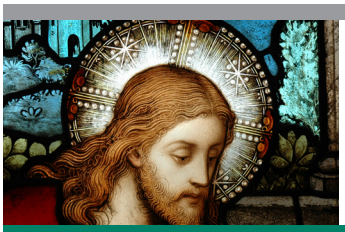
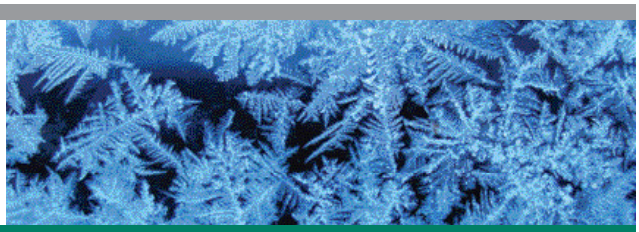


THE NATIONAL CATHOLIC RISK RETENTION GROUP, INC.



Safe Snow & Ice Removal Plan

Snow Removal from Rooftops

Heavy snowfalls can put undue strain on facilities, especially roofs. But how much snow is too much? The answer depends on a few factors, such as the pitch of the roof, the density of the snow and the roofing material.

It is advisable to meet with a roofing contractor for an assessment of when to begin the process of snow removal from your roof – the contractor can give you a general rule of thumb to follow throughout the season.

Removing snow from your roof has to be done with great care in order to avoid damaging the roofing material and ensure the safety of your staff/volunteers. For this reason, it is best to hire a professional roofing contractor.

Be sure to obtain proof of workers' compensation and general liability coverage from the contractor, and the parish and diocese should be named additional insureds.

The accumulation of snow and ice creates hazardous conditions for staff and visitors to your facilities. To help mitigate the risk of injury, all parishes and schools are encouraged to prepare for winter snowstorms by having a snow and ice removal plan in place.

To begin, designate a specific employee to be responsible for overseeing the snow and ice removal plan and, if possible, designate another employee as a backup.

Second, document the plan in writing and review it with staff each fall, before the winter season sets in.

Elements of a Plan

- Determine and document the priority areas for snow and ice removal in advance, such as parking lots, driveways, sidewalks and handicap accessible parking areas.
- Put the necessary snow/ice removal equipment, such as lightweight shovels, snow blowers and ice choppers, in place and make sure all equipment is operational.
- Order the necessary supplies and designate an employee to ensure your stock does not run low. Supplies should include salt, sand, and/or pre-mix.
- Determine which staff member will be responsible for removing the snow/ice and under what conditions (i.e., when snowfall is less than two inches). In the event that snow will begin falling overnight, document the time in which the staff member will begin snow removal work the following morning.
- Develop a list of able-bodied parishioners who may be able to volunteer their services for light snow removal.
- Ensure that a communication plan is in place to let employees and volunteers know about delayed openings or closures.
- Document the procedure for working with a snow removal service.

Contracting with a Snow Removal Service

The amount of snowfall and the size of your grounds will determine whether snow removal can be done by an employee or whether you will need the services of a snow removal contractor. Generally, when the snowfall is greater than two inches, the use of a contractor is recommended.

It is good practice to contract with a snow removal service in advance. Specify in the contract when the contractor is required to perform duties. Is the parish required to contact the contractor, or does the contractor begin after a specified amount of snowfall? Include other requirements, such as whether salt or ice melt is to be applied and to which areas.

The parish should provide the contractor with a rendering of the property that designates parking lots, walkways and other priority areas. If priority areas change depending on the day of the week (i.e., parish traffic patterns may differ on a weekend when Masses are scheduled), then be sure to indicate that.

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Heart Attack Warning Signs

If you experience any of the following signs, stop shoveling and seek medical attention:

- Chest discomfort. Most heart attacks involve discomfort in the center of the chest that lasts more than a few minutes, or that goes away and comes back. It can feel like uncomfortable pressure, squeezing, fullness or pain.
- Discomfort in other areas of the upper body. Symptoms can include pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw, or stomach.
- Shortness of breath. This feeling often comes along with chest discomfort, but shortness of breath can occur before the chest discomfort.
- Other signs. These may include breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea, or light-headedness.

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When entering into a contract with a snow removal service provider, the contract should include the provision that the parish and diocese are both held harmless with regard to liability arising out of the contractor's snow removal activities. Also, request a certificate of insurance from the contractor naming the parish and the diocese as additional insureds with a minimum liability limit of $1,000,000.

The term of the contract should be for one year without an automatic renewal. Review the contract and assess the service at the end of each winter and make a decision at that time about renewing the contract.

Post the contractor's contact information in a common work location and check the contact details at the beginning of each winter season to be sure they are current.

Work Done By a Volunteer or Employee

An employee or volunteer who is injured while removing snow or ice may be covered under workers' compensation coverage or a volunteer accident policy. For this reason, if an employee or volunteer is removing the snow or ice from the premises, it is good practice to keep a log of the following details:

- Name of person performing duties
- Date of snow removal
- Indication of the conditions (i.e., amount of accumulation)
- Time employee/volunteer began duties and time he or she ended
- Specific areas that were shoveled and/or salted

When a Parish Leases Property

A parish is legally responsible for snow removal from the property it leases to tenants. The parish may, however, transfer the associated risks to the tenant by:

1.) stating in the lease agreement that the tenant is required to clear the lease premises of any snow and ice;

2.) including in the lease agreement an indemnity and defense clause to the benefit of the parish; and

3.) obtaining a certificate of insurance from the tenant naming the parish and diocese as additional insureds. This certificate of insurance should be renewed every year as long as the tenant is leasing the property.

State Law Considerations

Please consult with your diocesan legal counsel to identify any diocesan policies or legal issues unique to your state.

De-icing Materials to Have on Hand

There are a variety of materials used to treat surfaces after a snowfall or freezing rain, but parishes will generally use the following:

- Rock salt (sodium chloride) is used to either prevent ice from forming or to break the bond of ice to the pavement. Advantages of rock salt are that it is cheap, effective and readily available. Disadvantages are its environmental impact, its tendency to cause corrosion, and its ineffectiveness in temperatures below 20°F.
- Sand is effective at providing traction but is harmful to the environment and has a tendency to clog drainage structures.
- Pre-Mix is used in reduced-salt areas and when air temperature is very low. It is less harmful to the environment than rock salt. Disadvantages are that it is expensive and must be stored and kept dry.

Snow removal contractors may use other materials such as Liquid Calcium Chloride, which is highly effective for de-icing when mixed with salt and is also an effective anti-icing agent. It is less harmful to the environment and equipment than salt and sand but it is costly and its application must be timed correctly.

Other Resources

The National Safety Council has published a one-page document on tips for safe shoveling. To download the document, please go to:

http://www.nsc.org/news_resources/Resources/Documents/Snow_Shoveling.pdf

The NY State Office of Emergency Management' website offers tips related to generator safety, protecting water pipes, and avoiding carbon monoxide poisoning:

http://www.semo.state.ny.us/info/publicsafety/winter_safety_tips.cfm

The Federal Emergency Management Agency offers tips on what to do before, during and after a storm, and how to prevent flooding:

http://www.fema.gov/hazard/winter/index.shtm

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