



Risk Management

by Nancy Wood and Jesse Denton

Is your hotel ready for winter? Take the time now to check your preparedness

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If your hotel is located in an area that can expect snow or ice during the winter months NOW is the time to stock up on the items the hotel will need. These include, but may not be limited to:

- ✓ Ample amounts of snow & ice melt
- ✓ Adequate supplies of snow shovels
- ✓ Personal protective equipment (boots, gloves and headwear) for associates who may be asked to shovel snow
- ✓ A signed contract with an insured contractor for snow and ice removal
- ✓ If you have a snow blower, be sure it is in working condition and that you have sufficient gasoline on hand to power it
- ✓ An adequate supply of walk-off mats



Stocking up on Winter supplies are not the only concern for hotel managers as the cold weather approaches. Will you be able to successfully defend a claim involving a guest or visitor who may slip and fall on ice or snow? No matter how diligent the hotel's efforts at snow and ice removal may be winter conditions often make it impossible to render outside surfaces completely free and clear of ice or snow. In the event a guest or passerby does sustain an injury, the hotel will need to prove the following to be able to amount an affirmative defense:

- ✓ Exact weather conditions at the time of the incident. Hint – buy a thermometer and mount it outside an office window. This will allow you to record exact temperatures.
- ✓ Maintain a log of exactly what you did to minimize the risk of a slip and fall. A sample log is located on the reverse of this page. Remember, there is no such thing as too much detail. Details that should be logged include:
 - Type of precipitation
 - When it began
 - When you first called the snow removal contractor
 - What steps your own staff took, include the names of associates.
 - The exact times your staff applied ice melt, shoveled, etc...



It is also recommended that you review your property now for possible trouble spots.

Possible trouble spots to look for include:

- ✓ Pay attention to where downspouts may empty out. Do they empty onto walkways or between parked cars? A lot can be clear and dry by day, but snow melting from the roof can cause icing problems at night when the temperature drops below freezing.
- ✓ Low spots where water may pond and freeze at night.
- ✓ High traffic areas.

In many of the areas that do not expect to experience ice or snow, winter is the rainy season. This is also a time of increased awareness for those lodging properties. Wet floor signs and additional walk off mats at entrance points at the front of the hotel as well as the entrances to back of the house areas are a necessity. Wet floor signs and mops or other materials and

equipment should be readily available to control this hazard as much as possible. The exterior walkways should be reviewed regularly. Areas where water may stand for longer periods of time algae may grow and cause a slippery walking surface. This should be removed as soon as possible. The inspection of walkway and parking lots for safety and security reason should be on a Preventative Maintenance schedule and documented.

It is most important to keep walkways clear, dry as practical and to warn everyone using the walkway of the possibility of ice, snow and water. When areas cannot be clear for normal use, barrier tape may be considered to reduce the probability of someone using the walkway. Mops, squeegees, brooms, traffic cones, wet floor signs, caution tape and good mats should all be part of your hotel's winter weather response. ✧

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