

## Clearing snow and ice from pavements and public spaces

### *Will I be held liable if someone falls on a path I have cleared?*

There is no law preventing you from clearing snow and ice on the pavement outside your property, pathways to your property or public spaces.

It is very unlikely that you would face any legal liability, as long as you are careful and use common sense to ensure that you do not make the pavement or pathway clearly more dangerous than before. People using areas affected by snow and ice also have a responsibility to be careful to keep themselves safe.



### *What can I do to help clear snow and ice from pavements and public spaces?*

Practical advice from highway engineers is given below. This is not a comprehensive list.

- **Start early:** It is much easier to remove fresh, loose snow than to clear compacted ice that has been compressed by people walking on it.
- **Do not use hot water:** This will melt the snow, but may replace it with black ice, increasing the risk of injury.
- **Be a good neighbour:** Some people may be unable to clear snow and ice on paths leading to their property, or the footway fronting their property. Snowfall and cold weather pose particular difficulties for them gaining access to and from their property or walking to the shops.
- **Be considerate:** If you are shovelling snow, consider where you are going to put it, so that it does not block people's paths, or block drainage channels. You could simply shift the problem elsewhere.
- **Clear the way:** Make a pathway down the middle of the area to be cleared first, so you have a clear surface to walk on. Then you can shovel the snow from the centre to the sides.



- **Use salt:** Spreading some salt on the area you have cleared will help to prevent ice forming. Table salt or dishwasher salt will work, but avoid spreading it on plants or grass as they may be damaged. A few grams (a tablespoon) for each square metre you clear should work. The salt found in salting bins will be needed for keeping roads clear.

Give particular care and attention to steps and steep gradients to ensure snow and ice is removed. You might need to apply additional salt to these areas.

- **Use the sun:** The sun can help you. Removing the top layer of snow will allow the sun to melt any ice beneath. However you will need to cover any ice with salt to stop it refreezing overnight.
- **Salt substitutes:** If there is no salt available, then a little sand or ash is a reasonable substitute. It will not have the same de-icing properties as salt but should offer grip under foot.

### *Where can I find out more information about what I can do in an emergency?*

The Preparing for Emergencies web pages on DirectGov contain useful information on how you can prepare for all emergencies. The pages can be found at [www.direct.gov.uk/preparingforemergencies](http://www.direct.gov.uk/preparingforemergencies)

### *Why are the Council and the Government publishing this information?*

During the severe winter in 2009/10, many people across the country worked very hard to keep our transport network open. This included many members of the public who cleared pavements and public spaces around their homes. Some people, however, were deterred from taking action to clear pavements and other public spaces because they feared that they might be sued.

An independent review of the transport sector's response to the severe weather of 2009/10 recommended that the Department for Transport should publish a note on good practice for members of the public in clearing snow and ice from footways and other public spaces. The Local Government Association published a report on behalf of councils which reached the same conclusion. The Government is committed, as a key part of the Big Society agenda, to remove the barriers which may unnecessarily prevent people from helping themselves and those around them.