

Risk Manager

Answers, resources and information to help assess and reduce risk

Snow Removal – Working in a Winter Wonderland By Keith Myers

Snow removal is a one of the many problems we must deal with during the winter season. It is a task that can cause many injuries and incidents. Here are some tips to help deal with snow removal:

- Make sure to dress warmly and in layers. If you start to be overheated, you can remove a layer of clothing.
- Dress in bright colors. Bright colors make you more visible to other people and drivers, thereby reducing the possibility of an accident.
- When removing snow, try to push the snow instead of lifting it.
- Bend your knees so that you are using your leg muscles and not your back muscles.
- Do not work until you are completely exhausted. Take frequent, short breaks to prevent fatigue and muscle strains.
- Remember basic snow blower safety – do not attempt to clear snow from the chute when equipment is running; always turn the power off and use appropriate tools to clear blockages. Never put any body part in or near moving parts.
- Shoveling snow raises the heart rate and blood pressure. Two (2) minutes of shoveling snow can result in heart rate levels higher than those normally recommended during aerobic exercise. If you feel tightness or pain in your chest while shoveling snow, stop and alert someone of the situation.
- Make sure a preventive maintenance program is in place for snow removal on roofs. Snow is very heavy and can cause a roof to collapse. Two feet of snow on the average-sized residential roof can be equivalent to 38,000 pounds or 19 tons. This additional weight puts stress on the roof and weakens its structure. Remove snow from roof when accumulation equals halfway point – 6 inches forecast, start snow removal at 3 inches, if safe to do so. No need to scrape roof entirely clean – this can lead to damage of roof covering material. Get snow off the roof before it can cause ice damage – Ice dams typically form when snow on the roof starts to melt due to heat escaping. Melt water runs down the roof, refreezes and clogs up gutters. Because gutters are now blocked, melting snow and water is forced to travel under roofing material, thereby causing leaks. Keep gutters and drains free of ice and snow to assist in preventing cold weather precipitation leaks. Avoiding snow in Pennsylvania is nearly impossible, but knowing how to deal with it may help prevent property damage and injuries to yourself and others.

For additional information or training on best practices and safety management within your school entity, please contact Director of Risk Management Sharon Orr at (866) 401-6600, ext. 7152 or sorr@cmregent.com.