

Syresham Parish Council

Snow and Ice Clearance - Guidance Policy

Syresham Parish Council are aware of the work involved in keeping all roads, paths and pavements free from such weather, and that in order to try and reduce the risk of slips on ice, frost or snow, have assessed the risk and put this guidance policy in place to assist the local community.

Whether or not to clear snow, and salt or grit can be a contentious issue, and by not touching snow, ice and frost, the Parish Council cannot be sued in the event of someone slipping over. Trying to make conditions easier could leave Syresham Parish Council open to claims if someone subsequently has an accident; however the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) advocates accident prevention ahead of fear about being sued because someone has slipped over on a surface that has been cleared.

The reality is that if paths and pavements are cleared either by Council representatives or by members of the public voluntarily, they should remain safe and clear themselves, reducing the likelihood of slips and falls and therefore injury.

There becomes however a further risk if only part of the Village paths and pavements are cleared, and therefore paths and pavements should not be cleared in isolation as this is likely to create more problems than leaving untreated. That said, guidelines from the UK Government (Directgov) clearly states that anyone can clear snow and ice from the pavement outside their home or public spaces to prevent slips, trips and falls provided the tips below are followed.

Members of the Public should not be put off clearing paths because they are afraid of someone being injured, people walking on snow and ice have a responsibility to be careful themselves, and therefore if someone slips or falls, it is unlikely that they will sue, or that you volunteers would be held legally responsible for injuries provided the paths or pavements have been cleared carefully.

With the above in mind, and for the benefit of those members of the Parish Council or Members of the Public who voluntarily clear snow and ice, there are some key points to remember:

The Snow Code - Clearing Snow and Ice from Pavements and Public Spaces

- Do it early in the day - it's easier to move fresh, loose snow:
 - It's easier to move fresh, loose snow rather than hard snow that has packed together from people walking on it. So if possible, start removing the snow and ice in the morning. If you remove the top layer of snow in the morning, any sunshine during the day will help melt any ice beneath. You can then cover the path with salt before nightfall to stop it refreezing overnight.
- Don't use water - it might refreeze and turn to black ice:
 - Don't make the pathways more dangerous by causing them to refreeze. If you use water to melt the snow, it may refreeze and turn to black ice. Black ice increases the risk of injuries as it is invisible and very slippery.
 - You can melt snow or prevent black ice by spreading some salt on the area you have cleared. You can use ordinary table or dishwasher salt - a tablespoon for each square metre you clear should work. Don't use the salt found in salting bins - this will be needed to keep the roads clear.

- Be careful not to spread salt on plants or grass as it may damage them.
- If you don't have enough salt, you can also use sand or ash. These won't stop the path icing over as effectively as salt, but will provide good grip underfoot.
- pay extra attention when clearing steps and steep pathways - using more salt may help;
- take care when you move the snow:
 - When you're shovelling snow, take care where you put it so it doesn't block people's paths or drains. Make sure you make a path down the middle of the area first, so you have a clear surface to walk on. Then shovel the snow from the centre of the path, to the sides.
- Offer to clear your neighbour's paths:
 - If your neighbour will have difficulty getting in and out of their home, offer to clear snow and ice around their property as well. Check that any elderly or disabled neighbours are alright in the cold weather. If you're worried about them, try contacting their relatives or friends, or if necessary, the local council.
- People walking on snow and ice have a responsibility to be careful themselves.

Looking After Yourself

- The most important thing is to look after yourself when clearing snow. If at any point you don't feel confident to complete the task then you should not participate.
- Suitable clothing goes without saying, boots or wellies and plenty of warm and waterproof clothing. 25% of your body heat is lost through your head and hands so wear gloves and a hat. If you are working near the road it is advisable to be as visible as possible and wear a reflective vest/jacket.
- Clearing snow is hard physical work so if you volunteer make sure you are sufficiently fit, take plenty of breaks and know when to stop.
- If you are working alone ensure you have informed someone, your contact, of where you are and how long you intend to be.
- Have a charged mobile phone with you and phone/text your contact every one to two hours. Inform your contact of any changes to location or estimated return time.

Salt - What does it actually do?

- Salt dissolves into water and reduces its freezing point.
- Salt has no impact on removing snow or ice, as they are solid matter and there is no moisture for the salt to dissolve into.
- Salt that has been dissolved in moisture/water stops being effective at preventing freezing once temperatures drop to minus 6°C or below.

- The amount of salt required to treat an area is much less than you think. As a guide 20g (about a handful) should be sufficient to clear and protect a 1 square metre of cleared surface.
- Spreading salt prevents any melted water that may run off the cleared snow from re-freezing on the cleared pavement, this helps manage the risk of black ice.

Compacted Snow and Ice – What can be done?

- Snow becomes compact and forms ice once it has been walked on, this is hard to clear.
- Salt has no effect on snow or ice, it prevents only melted ice and snow from refreezing.
- If you cannot manually remove the ice, your main option is to spread grit or sand over the ice which can become embedded into it and provide traction when people walk on it.

Avoiding Negligent Behaviour

- Under common law a volunteer can only be considered negligent if they deliberately went out to create a hazard.
- Actions which could give rise to liability for negligence would be:
 - the careless release of snow from the shovel,
 - the careless placing of snow so as to conceal or create a hazard and
 - the use of water which actually increases the risk of slipping or skidding.
- Therefore:
 - do not use water as this can refreeze and create black ice.
 - do not release snow from the shovel into the actual or potential path of vehicles or pedestrians.
 - do not dump snow so as to create or conceal a hazard.

Suitable Tools

- Plastic light weight snow shovels or wide bladed shovels are the most appropriate tools;
- A regular metal shovel is the next best alternative but not as efficient, as the snow may stick to it;
- If the salt is fine enough, you could use a domestic grass spreader or lawn feeder to spread the salt. Make sure you wash out any salt before using on grass unless you want to kill the grass!
- Alternatively you can use a small scoop or garden trowel to distribute the salt if doing it by hand;
- A wheelbarrow to move tools, carry salt or move snow

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Snow and Ice Clearance Policy - Risk Assessment

Hazards, Effects and Risk Parties			Control Measures	Risk Calculation			Residual Risk	Comments
Hazard	Effect of Hazard	Persons at Risk		Severity	Likelihood	Score		
Extreme Weather	Illness / Injury	Members of Public	Recommend use of appropriate clothing / footwear, including gloves;	3	2	6	Medium	Snow and Ice Policy together with Risk Assessment available via Village Website to assist Members of the Community remain safe whilst clearing snow.
Slips, Trips and Falls	Injury	Members of Public	Recommend use of appropriate footwear;	3	2	6	Medium	
			Provide suitable advice on clearing snow and ice via Village Website and Syresham Times;					
Working Alone	Illness / Injury	Members of Public	Recommend working with someone and having mobile telephone available;	3	1	3	Low	
Traffic Accident	Injury	Members of Public	Recommend use of high-visibility clothing where working adjacent to the highway;	4	1	4	Low - Medium	
Lifting / Manual Handling	Injury	Members of Public	Recommend only undertaking clearance activities if physically fit enough to do so;	2	2	4	Low - Medium	
			Ensure clearance activities are undertaken in suitable periods with sufficient rest;					
Using Salt and Grit	Injury / Damage to Property	Members of Public	Recommend use of gloves to protect hands;	1	2	2	Low	
			Provide suitable advice on clearing snow and ice via Village Website and Syresham Times;					
Using Equipment	Injury / Damage to Property	Members of Public	Recommend use of suitable tools and equipment;	2	1	2	Low	Article in Syresham Times notifying Members of the Community of the Snow and Ice Clearance Guidance.