

Risk Reminder

SNOW REMOVAL PREPAREDNESS

GUIDELINES FOR PLOWING SNOW

Driving a snowplow is one of the toughest jobs around! It requires driving for long hours in the worst conditions. While you are concerned with providing safe travel for motorists, you must not overlook the safety of your own employees. The following is a list of guidelines to follow for safe snow plowing:

Trucks/Equipment Inspection: Trucks and equipment must be road worthy and ready to meet the needs of winter maintenance activities. Before removing anything, a complete vehicle and plow checkup is in order. The following is a list of items to inspect for the vehicle and plow:

Vehicle Inspection:

- Tire pressure, critical for traction in slippery conditions
- Fluid levels including engine oil, brake fluid, transmission fluid and windshield washer fluid
- Battery terminals for corrosion and tightness
- Horn, headlights, brake lights, turn signals, backup alarm and flashers to ensure they are operating
- Windshield wipers and defrosters for proper visibility

Plow Inspection:

- Check plow blade for damage, cracks, and proper alignment - install new blade if needed
- Look for missing and loose plow bolts
- Inspect plow pins and hydraulic hoses
- Check flags, markers, deflector springs, welds, etc.
- Operate plow - raise, lower and reverse



Be Familiar With Your Route: Perform pre-storm route inspection observing landmarks and the locations of possible hazards (guardrails, curbs, fire hydrants, railroad tracks, bridge joints, mailboxes, manhole covers, cement islands), or other obstructions which may exist above the level surface which may be hidden by falling or plowed snow.

Plowing Operation: When thinking of safety with regard to snow removal, there are some significant considerations that should be taken into account. They are as follows:

- Choose the speed appropriate for conditions. The type of street, amount of traffic and the depth of the snow will dictate your speed.
- Allow proper following distance (4 to 5 seconds depending upon the weather and surface conditions).
- Backings should be limited as much as possible - people tend to follow snowplows closely.
- Observe all traffic laws and signal your intentions clearly. Remember to wear your seatbelt.
- Keep your windshield and windows free of snow and ice. Clean lights frequently.
- Look far enough down the road to see hazards before you arrive. This helps you spot problems not only ahead of you, but to the sides as well.
- Check mirrors frequently (about every 3 to 5 seconds). It is important to see other motorists before they get into the blind spot behind the equipment.
- Be alert for stalled or parked cars, cars backing out of driveways and people walking in the street.
- Assist / report stranded motorists as necessary.
- Watch for signs of fatigue. Try to limit hours spent on the vehicle to 16 hours max, with 8 hours off. Let your supervisor know if you are tired or sleepy, or if you cannot do the job for other reasons.
- Before leaving the cab at the end of a plow, set the brakes and disengage the power to the spreader and snowplow. Top off the fuel and re-inspect the truck and equipment.

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Guidelines for Plowing Snow cont.

Safety Equipment: Even though you have done what you can to prevent mishaps, be prepared for the unexpected with safety equipment for emergencies such as:

- Fire Extinguisher
- First Aid Kit
- Blanket, boots, extra gloves, coat, hat, as needed
- Flashlight and flares or other portable flashers or warning equipment
- Two-way radio or cell phone
- Extra washer fluid



By following the recommendations listed above, you can ensure safe and efficient snow removal operations for your municipality.

SNOW SHOVELING SAFETY

Shoveling snow is very hard work. It can cause muscle strains and back injuries, especially if you do not lift properly. It can also put severe stress on your heart and may even result in a heart attack. Shoveling snow, especially if the snow is wet, is like picking up heavy weights. One full shovel load of wet snow can weigh as much as 25 pounds.

Be healthy and avoid back injuries this winter by following these shoveling safety tips:

- Before you start shoveling, move and stretch your muscles to warm them up.
- Layer your clothing to keep muscles warm and flexible.
- Avoid caffeine and nicotine before beginning to shovel. These are stimulants, which may increase your heart rate and cause your blood vessels to constrict. This places extra stress on the heart.
- Use a shovel with a handle that is long enough to let you keep your back just about straight when lifting. An ergonomic shovel with a bent handle is better than one with a straight handle.
- Take it slow. Shoveling can raise your heart rate and blood pressure dramatically.
- Drink plenty of water. Dehydration is just as big of an issue in cold winter months as it is in the summer.
- Push the snow whenever possible rather than lifting it.
- Lift smaller loads of snow. Don't overload your shovel.
- Lift with your legs bent and your back as straight as possible, so you are lifting with your legs rather than your back.
- Step in the direction you are throwing the snow. This will help to avoid twisting your lower back. Do not toss snow over your shoulder or to the side.
- Take frequent breaks. To reverse the excessive bending and extend your back, stand straight and walk around. Place your hands toward the back of your hips and bend backward slightly for several seconds.
- Most importantly—listen to your body. Don't shovel to the point of exhaustion. If you are out of breath, take a break. If you feel tightness in your chest, stop immediately.

