

Snow Shovelling/Ice Control

City Ordinance Requirements & Helpful Hints

For more information, see these URLs:

go.madison.com/snow-rules OR go.madison.com/snow-faq.

What & when: Key to this homeowner obligation is that the entire public sidewalk needs to be cleared by noon the day after the snowfall stops, according to city ordinance. The city also requires private sidewalks, driveways and parking areas to be "maintained in a safe condition."

The city actually does keep track of whether a snowfall ended before midnight !

The city mandates that sidewalks must be cleared, edge-to-edge, of snow or ice accumulation and, if ice has formed and can't be removed, residents must spread sand, salt, or another substance so the ice is not dangerous.

Our co-op property does not extend to the street corner, so this does not pertain to us, but for purely for informational purposes, owners with property on a corner must also clear any curb ramps.

If a property owner won't be home, they must arrange to have snow and ice removed if there should be any accumulation.

Get out early, late, & often: Because of the high foot traffic on Willy Street, we have always tried to be on top of keeping our sidewalk along the street as clear as early as possible, rather than putting it off until the deadline dictated by the city's ordinance. With co-op members having differing schedules, some shovel or snowblow early, some during the day, and some in the evening, which shares the snow inches around.

An additional benefit of shoveling early, late, & often is that it is much easier to shovel the snow before it gets tramped down on the sidewalk by all the people on their way to work or school. Also, since that

tramped down snow is more difficult to get all of it off the sidewalk, its remains often end up turning into small icy spots.

Preventing and/or mitigating falls: An additional primary goal is to ensure that all snow has been cleared and any ice which may have formed has been remediated on all the sidewalks, as well as the porches and their handrails. Having the handrails cleared of snow & ice ensures that those are available for someone who has slipped or tripped to arrest their likely fall, whether a co-op member, one of our visitors, or, any delivery or repair persons on our property.

Property insurance: If we have not taken all prudent homeowner steps to remove snow & do ice control, our property insurance may not cover us in the event of an accident.

No mail delivery: Postal mail deliverers can suspend the mail delivery to any house on their route, if in their assessment the sidewalks, parches and porch steps are unsafe.

City fined us, due to complaint: One recent winter—for the first time EVER—we got fined by the city because someone had complained about our sidewalk along the street not having been shovelled and/or lack of adequate ice control.

Property owners who do not clear the sidewalks risk a \$20 to \$50 fine—per property (i.e., per house number)—for a first offense and a \$30 to \$100 ticket per subsequent violations per property.

PARKING LOT & DRIVEWAY

The co-op has a contract with a local business to plow our driveway and parking lot when there is an inch or more of snowfall—if needed, see at the end of co-op's phone list for the contact info for the company. The current company mostly uses 'Bobcat loaders' (which they bring with them) and often get to us well after dark.

DRIVEWAY LIP

This will get plowed in, again & again & again, by the city snowplows, so, we need to dig it out as soon as possible. This is urgent because that snow/slush mixture thrown aside by the snowplows will set overnight into something with the consistency of cement. Throw this snow from the city plow to the east of our driveway—that way the next snowplow will not be plowing the exact same snow into our driveway lip over and over.

SIDEWALKS

Shovel or snowblow all the co-op sidewalks, both along the street and all those between and behind our houses. Remember all four houses make up the co-op and if everyone pitches in as they are able, everything should get taken care of.

Shovels & Ice Choppers: These are kept in the outdoor closets on either side of the entrance to Units Five & Seven. Before the snow seasons begins, someone should check that these implements are in good shape for the coming snow season, that there is an adequate variety of them for different sizes of users, and that the needed variations of the implements are available (e.g., some shovels have a plastic scraping edge, at least a couple of heavy-weight ice choppers, at least a couple of brooms, etc.) If you do not find one comfortable for you to use, alert the maintenance coordinator.

Also, see below for 'Most Efficient Method to Handshovel a Sidewalk.'

Snowblower: The co-op has an electric snowblower—it is kept in the shed at the back of the parking lot, except for its battery, which is kept on a charger just inside the entrance hallway to Units Five & Seven. If you have a set of the co-op's 'basement keys,' you will find on that ring a key stamped "5.7"—that key will open the door for the entrance hallway to Units Five & Seven.

See below for 'Most Efficient Use of the Snowblower.'

Trim overhanging plant growth from the sidewalk edges: Having that stuff cleared away so plant matter is not in the way of the snowblower or shovels will make it easier to clear the sidewalks.

MOST EFFICIENT USE OF THE SNOWBLOWER

You'll need to make 2-3 passes back and forth to clear snow and it is best to aim the chute so that it throws the snow towards the houses. With the chute angled towards the houses, more space is left along the parkway (the space between the sidewalk and curb) for plowed snow to build up.

The snowblower often leaves a thin layer of snow behind that can be quickly shoveled away to achieve bare concrete.

MOST EFFICIENT METHOD TO HANDSHOVEL A SIDEWALK

First, clear a shovel-width down the center of a length of sidewalk, then, while standing in that shoveled section, face either the street or our houses and shovel away the snow between where you are standing in the already-shovelled center of the sidewalk and the edge of the sidewalk—throw the snow forward off the shovel; then, repeat on the other half of the sidewalk.

Not only does this method reduce the risk of twisting your back (because you are mostly throwing the snow straight forward off your shovel), it also reduces the distance the snow needs to be heaved away.

An additional benefit to this method is that any pedestrians coming along will be able to use that first shoveled section (down the length of the middle of the sidewalk). This already cleared path will reduce the number of places where snow has been tramped down from the steps of any pedestrians; snow which has been tramped down requires more effort to get it up off cement of the sidewalk and also ends up turning to an icy spot in a day or two.

PORCHES

Shovel the entire porch flooring & the porch's handrails: If at all possible, this should be done using either a broom, or, a shovel with a plastic scraping edge—both will be more forgiving on the stained wood.

The porch flooring & also the top of all handrails should be shoveled free of snow, as leaving the snow on the floorboards & handrails makes them deteriorate faster, so that we might have to replace the porch more often.

Additionally, we want all porch handrails free of snow & ice, in order to ensure that those are easy for someone to grasp and thereby, perhaps to avert or mitigate the severity of a potential fall.

Make it hard for ice to form on the porch's steps: Through some miracle of science, clearing the snow out thoroughly from the corners on both ends of porch steps prevents the later formation of ice on the steps !

ICE CONTROL

Sand buckets strategically placed around the co-op property: At the start of winter, one of the co-op tasks is to place a filled sand bucket (white five-gallon pails) at key points around the co-op. Not only does sand on ice make it quite safe to walk on, if any sun reaches the sand, the sand heats up (since the sand is darker than the ice) and starts to degrade the ice underneath it. This will help break up the ice faster, so that it can be completely cleared off the sidewalk.

Never leave a sand bucket empty—if you cannot refill sand from the city sand barrels at the top & the bottom of the nearby Paterson Street hill, inform someone who will be able to do so. Also, if the city sand barrels are empty, call the city's Eastside Streets office and alert them to come refill it (but do not tell them that you took any of their sand for our sidewalks).

The city offers free sand at multiple locations throughout Madison—their sand does have an amount of salt mixed into it.

If there is ice on the sidewalks, you do not need to spread sand on the entire width of the sidewalk—usually putting sand in a two-foot-wide center section of the sidewalk will be adequate as people travelling by will walk where the sand is.

If there is ice on the driveway, spreading sand down one side of the driveway (either where the right tires run, or where the left tires run) will help a great deal.

To see where free sand can be picked up, visit this URL:
go.madison.com/sand.

FALL PREPARATION

Get a check-up for the snowblower & its charger

Check condition & variety of shovels, ice choppers, brooms

Trim back overhanging plant matter from sidewalk edges

Fill & place sand buckets strategically around the co-op

Review this document with co-op members