



North

Yorkshire County Council

Business and Environmental Services

Your ref:

Our ref: M44001AS.MR.DB

David Bowe
Corporate Director

County Hall
Northallerton DL7 8AH

Tel: 01609 532556

Fax: 01609 760794

E-mail: david.bowe@northyorks.gov.uk

www.northyorks.gov.uk

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Dear Sir/Madam

WINTER MAINTENANCE SERVICE

The County Council has recently reviewed its Winter Maintenance Service in light of experiences during the period of extreme weather last winter. This review focussed on the specific issues which restricted our gritting operations and on what additional help could be provided during snow conditions. This has led to proposals being developed for improved resilience to guard against the impact of possible future national salt shortages and also the opportunity for community participation in delivering an enhanced winter service.

Firstly let me reassure you that the County Council has fully restocked all its salt barns and has over 50,000T of salt stored which represents our normal winter usage. Arrangements are also in place to keep restocking the salt barns throughout the winter so that we continue to be one of the best prepared local authorities in the country.

However, the main reason for writing to you is to make you aware of recent government advice concerning members of the public clearing snow and ice from pavements and public spaces. Last winter we found that some people were discouraged from clearing snow and ice from pavements because of the fear that they may be exposed to legal action if someone fell on the area they had cleared. The County Council has been trying to allay this fear and has been pressing Ministers to provide guidance that would give the necessary reassurance. We are therefore pleased that the Department of Transport has recently published guidance for households and traders who wish to clear snow and ice from paths in front of their property, pavements and other public spaces. It is intended that this will empower those who wish to act in a neighbourly way. I enclose a copy of this guidance for your information.

We are also looking to develop the concept of community participation in snow clearance a step further. This would be a scheme where community groups, probably led by the Parish or Town Council, could organise volunteers to clear snow from areas that the County Council's normal winter service would not reach. We are currently developing a training package and appropriate guidance with a small number of pilot communities and hope to be able to offer the scheme to other communities in the near future. If this scheme interests you please let your local Area Office know and we can provide more information.



Finally, we are mindful of the need to be proactive in our communication of information to the public. We have made a number of improvements to our website and would encourage you to make use of it to source information both now and during any weather emergencies.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'D. Bowe', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

DAVID BOWE
Corporate Director

CLEARING SNOW AND ICE FROM PAVEMENTS AND PUBLIC SPACES

This guide is designed to help you to act in a neighbourly way by safely 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 responsibility to be careful themselves.

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 compared to 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 indeed 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.
- If shovelling snow, consider where you are going to put it, so that it does not block people's paths, or block drainage channels. This could shift the problem elsewhere.
- 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.
- Spreading some salt on the area you have cleared will help to prevent any ice forming. Table salt or dishwasher salt will work, but avoid spreading on plants or grass as they may be damaged by it. 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.

Particular care and attention should be given 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 to your advantage. 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.
- 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 the impacts of all emergencies. The pages can be found at www.direct.gov.uk/preparingforemergencies

Why is 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 this 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.