



Maintaining Clear Means of Egress - Snow and Ice Removal

This communication is being issued to emphasize the critical importance of ensuring all means of entry and egress are kept clear of snow, ice, and other obstructions at all times.

Failure to maintain clear pathways for entering and exiting a building poses a severe risk to the health and safety of people receiving services, staff and visitors to the site. This risk is particularly increased in the event of a fire or other emergency where immediate and unimpeded access or evacuation is necessary.

To best ensure a safe environment is maintained for everyone at the site, ensure all entry and exit points are regularly inspected and cleared of any impediments.

Non-removal of snow and ice is extremely dangerous and can specifically result in:

- **Impaired Ability to Evacuate:** Includes blocking or impeding the safe and timely exit of anyone at the site at any time.
- **Increased Risk of Falls:** Hazardous conditions created by ice and snow significantly increase the likelihood of slips, trips, and falls, potentially leading to serious injuries.
- **Hindered Emergency Service Response:** Non-maintained entryways and blocked fire hydrants can impede the response of fire, medical, and other emergency services.
- **Blocked Vents:** Ice and snow buildup can obstruct building vents, potentially impacting air quality or ventilation systems.

Recommended Action Steps:

Agencies operating programs with a physical site should review and reinforce internal policy and procedures to address snow and ice removal. This includes, but is not limited to:

- **Proactive Monitoring:** Regularly monitor weather forecasts and be prepared for snow and ice accumulation.
- **Timely Removal:** Implement a system for prompt and thorough removal of snow and ice from all primary and secondary means of entry/ egress, including all exterior doors, stairways, emergency egress landings, pathways, decks, ramps, and any other designated exit routes.
- **Equipment Review:** Ensure all sites are equipped with necessary snow and ice removal tools, including shovels and de-icing salt, to maintain safe conditions.
- **Regular Inspections:** Conduct frequent inspections of all egress routes to ensure they remain clear and accessible, especially after snowfall or during icy conditions. Keep in mind that significant wind can also shift snow accumulation to paths where it had not been previously noted.
- **Contingency Planning:** Have a clear plan in place for addressing snow and ice removal, including designated staff responsibilities and, if necessary, arrangements with external services. This may also include alternate meeting spots during evacuations to keep people safe from extreme weather. (e.g., inside heated agency vehicles.)
- **Create ample space:** The cleared space must be wide enough for all individuals, including those using wheelchairs or other mobility devices, to enter and exit the premises with adequate room for maneuvering.
- **Snow and ice removal from other critical areas:** Agencies should also plan for snow and ice removal in other critical areas, including evacuation meeting points. Additionally, a 3-foot radius

around all fire hydrants on the property should be kept clear, as well as a direct path from the hydrant to the street should be maintained at all times.