



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.

Driving in icy / hazardous conditions

In icy or hazardous conditions motorists should expect to drive differently than they usually do. When sub-zero temperatures are forecasted ice and sometimes black ice forming is a common occurrence. If possible motorists should consider whether they need to make the journey but if they do then they should follow the below tips:

- Slow down, steer gently and avoid harsh turns, braking or acceleration.
- Keep a safe distance between themselves and other vehicles.
- Look well ahead to anticipate problems.
- When pulling away, use 2nd gear if possible to avoid wheel spin.
- When braking, get into a low gear earlier than normal, allowing the speed to fall, and use the brake pedal gently.
- If in a skid, turn the steering into the skid, easing off the accelerator but not braking suddenly.
- When cornering, allow the speed to reduce well before bends and corners by easing off the accelerator. Try to avoid using the accelerator in rounding a corner as it may cause wheel spin and result in a skid.
- When encountering black ice - which though not visible can be detected because the steering will feel light and/or the noise created by the tyres on the road will cease - reduce speed by easing off the accelerator rather than braking.

Motorists should ensure that they have checked their batteries at the beginning of the winter and that their tyres have been checked for the correct pressure and tread depth.

In addition wiper-blades should be checked and in good condition, you should also ensure anti-freeze is in the engine which acts as a coolant.