

WINTER WEATHER PROPERTY RISK CONTROL

I will not bore you with meteorologist's forecasts and their evaluation of weather patterns. If you're a Vermonter you know its coming. The snow, ice, and cold are right around the corner.

What can we do? *Plan!* Schools can take steps to ensure that the winter weather does not result in a loss that damages property and interrupts normal operations.

This bulletin outlines basic risk control measures to reduce the risk potential for school facilities during the winter months.

REMOVAL OF SNOW AND ICE ON THE PROPERTY

Immediately after a heavy snowfall, remove snow and ice from property access roads and walkways to maintain access to your school by emergency services in case of a loss.

A properly planned and executed snow removal program is critical for property protection because:

- Cleared drives and parking areas allow access for emergency vehicles and clear walkways will allow for easy access to the building by external emergency responders.
- Traffic areas cleared of snow and ice will minimize the possibility of slips, trips, or falls by emergency personnel.



- Clearing snow and ice from fire hydrants, hose connections, and fire protection valves will keep them visible and easily accessible to firefighters.

PREVENTING ROOF COLLAPSE

Snow is heavy; ice even heavier. Depending on the building age and type of roof; excessive snow and ice can cause serious property damage, or even roof collapse. Contributing to roof collapse are the rapid freeze and thaw cycles that occur throughout the winter. Ice can quickly accumulate, blocking roof drains. Then the weight of ice and snow buildup can overload a roof above its design specifications resulting in collapse. The following risk control best practices will help you reduce the likelihood of this situation developing.





RISK CONTROL BEST PRACTICES

To lessen the chances of serious property damage due to snow and ice accumulation on the roof:

- Clear accumulation of snow from the roof, particularly in areas of different elevations where drifts quickly build up.
- Initiate a formal snow removal program with a local contractor or trained staff utilizing proper equipment and the appropriate safety planning for those workers. Equipment that can damage a roof (such as ice chopper or blowtorch) should never be used.
- Keep an updated winter emergency response plan in effect. Include contact numbers for contractors, etc.
- Verify that drains are clear to allow run-off of melting snow. If the roof is pitched and without drains, open paths to the eaves to ensure drainage and prevent ponding of water.
- Regularly inspect roof drains and remove debris that could prevent flow. Make sure exterior down spouts are clear of snow and ice at the outlets.
- As snow compresses and absorbs rainwater the increased weight on the roof will result in depressions that will not drain. Once this condition begins it only gets worse, and if appropriate action is not taken, the roof could eventually collapse.

Important!

Keep the roof well maintained and do roof repairs and covering replacements as soon as required.

PREVENTING FROZEN AND BURSTING WATER PIPES

Variables such as inside temperature, outside temperature, insulation, and placement in the building all can have an effect on the freezing of indoor pipes. Pipes in attics, above ceilings, in crawl spaces and basements, and near exterior walls are highly vulnerable to freezing, especially where there is poor insulation, wall cracks or other openings that allow entry of cold outside air.

Monitor important risk control equipment such as automatic sprinkler systems, fire pumps, hoses, and hydrants. Whether or not piping in these systems actually bursts, any freezing of water can block water flow, preventing proper operation in case of an emergency.

RISK CONTROL BEST PRACTICES

To prevent the formation of ice in pipes due to freezing temperatures and to prevent pipes from bursting, we recommend that you:

- Always place piping in heated areas of a building.
- Properly insulate attics, exterior walls and other areas lacking adequate heating.
- Repair broken windows, ill-fitting doors and other conditions that allow heat loss.
- Maintain heat in the building at all times. No area with piping should be allowed to fall below 40 degrees (*having safe emergency measures in place during a prolonged power failure*).
- Provide insulation around a pipe sufficient to reduce heat loss, or provide heat tracing, if the pipe might be exposed to freezing temperatures.



- Install low temperature alarms (with remote monitoring) in cold-prone areas.
- Adequately maintain and prepare dry-pipe sprinkler systems for cold weather (drain low points, etc).
- Service and clear snow and ice from hydrants, outside hose connections, and fire protection system valves to prevent freezing of these systems.

Important!

Identify the main water shut-off valve(s) for the building and ensure that key personnel know where they are in case of a pipe break.

Never attempt to thaw a frozen pipe with an open flame.

If you would like additional information contact:

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Advice given in this bulletin is general in nature and covers basic procedures applicable to properties susceptible to cold weather, snow, and ice. It does not propose to cover all possible conditions, perils, or hazards which may be found at a given location, nor to provide complete and all encompassing loss prevention advice. Other factors could contribute to a loss, or prevent or mitigate a loss.

