

## Snow & Ice Build-Up Fact Sheet



### Snow Policy Summary:

Denver requires that property owners clear snow and ice from their sidewalks, including adjacent ADA ramps, so that EVERYONE has safe access throughout the city! Senior citizens, people with disabilities, parents with strollers, and mail carriers – just to name a few – struggle to negotiate hazardous walkways. We need to do our part to make our community safe and accessible for all.

**SIDEWALKS:** Denver requires property owners or tenants to clear their walkways, **including adjacent ADA ramps**, so that EVERYONE has safe access throughout the City! Senior citizens, people with disabilities, parents with strollers, and mail carriers -just to name a few -struggle to negotiate hazardous walkways. We need to do our part to make our community safe and accessible for all.

- **Timing:** After now has stopped falling, businesses need to begin clearing their sidewalks immediately. Residences need to clear their sidewalks by the next day.
- **Report a Problem:** If it has been more than 24 hours after a snow event and sidewalks near you are still not shoveled, please contact [Denver 3-1-1](tel:303311) to provide the address of un-shoveled sidewalks.
- **Enforcement:** Inspectors leave a time-stamped notice at properties with un-shoveled sidewalks. After receiving a notice, businesses have four hours and residences have 24 hours before an inspector's re-check and a potential \$150 fine.
- Tips: For how to properly shovel snow, please visit **Denver Health's Snow Removal Injury Prevention**

### Causes:

- **Freeze-Thaw Cycles:** Unlike the Midwest and East Coast where below freezing conditions are steady throughout the winter, Denver's climate provides 300 days of sunshine each year and warm temperatures often causing snow to melt quickly. The snowmelt runs down the gutter in the street until it is collected by a storm drain inlet or catch-basin (the opening in the curb) that connects to the underground storm drain beneath the street. When we experience an extended cold-spell or a period where the daytime temperatures are neither sufficient nor long enough to cause the snow to entirely melt, only partial melting occurs during the day and the snowmelt freezes at night or in the shadow of trees and structures before it can reach a storm drain inlet. With repeated partial daytime warming and night-time freezing over several days, the ice begins to accumulate in the gutter.
- **Obstructions in Gutters:** It is important for gutters to remain free of obstructions, including snow, so that water can flow during melting conditions.

- **Shade:** Temperatures in the shade are significantly lower than sunny locations. Shade prevents melting and exacerbates ice build-up. Shade is most common on the south side of east-west streets, but is also caused by structures, tall vegetation, trees and fences.
- **Drainage is NOT a cause of ice build-up.**

### Solutions:

- An effective pro-active solution that property owners can implement is to **apply de-icing materials to the sidewalks in advance of forecasted snowstorms**. Placing de-icing materials on the pavement before the storm makes snow and ice accumulation less likely and removal much easier.
- Business owners and homeowners **should not push snow into gutters or streets** as this will exacerbate ice formation in shaded areas. Instead, place the removed snow on lawn areas where available, or move it to a sunny location where it can melt; as long as doing so does not create other safety hazards.
- It is the homeowner's responsibility to clear the sidewalk and the ADA ramps. If ice does build-up, take advantage of warm days to break it up and remove it.
- Property owners may want to consider removing trees or fences that cause shade.
- **Denver residents can call 3-1-1 or email [311@denvergov.org](mailto:311@denvergov.org) to report ice accumulation on the street and request attention by the City.**

Please keep in mind that each location is unique. Some areas require infrequent ice removal, while other areas require more attention. Because of Denver's varied geography and streetscape, coupled with our weather swings, we address situations on a case-by-case basis. Please contact us whenever unsafe conditions exist as a result of serious ice build-up in your area.

### Street Plowing:

- Main streets, or most streets with stripes, are the priority for Denver Public Works' large plows. These are the streets that carry most of the city's traffic, as well as emergency vehicles and public transportation.
- In addition to plowing the main streets, Denver frequently uses a dry deicing material to add traction to the roadways and help break up snow and ice. Denver uses another material called liquid magnesium chloride, particularly Downtown, in support of air quality efforts. The number of plows deployed and use of de-icing materials depends on the weather conditions.
- During major snow events residential streets will be plowed one single pass down the center of every side street at the discretion of the Mayor's office and DOTI (Department of Transportation & Infrastructure), to prevent deep ice rutting and to keep the streets passable. The residential plows shave off the top few inches of snow pack and will not expose bare pavement. 3-1-1 cannot accommodate special plowing requests, however, they can accommodate ice blading and sanding requests.

### Bus Shelters:

- Bus shelters are privately owned. The companies are supposed to maintain them and clear snow. Please call or email 311 to report a bus shelter that has not be cleared of snow.

For more information: [denvergov.org/snow](https://denvergov.org/snow)



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