



Winter Weather Preparedness in Hospitality



Are You Ready?

As temperatures drop, the risk of slips, trips, and falls rises — especially in the hospitality industry, where guest safety is paramount. Hotels, restaurants, event venues, and other public-facing businesses must be proactive in managing winter weather hazards.

Snow, ice, and freezing rain can create dangerous conditions in parking lots, entryways, sidewalks, and other high-traffic areas. These slick surfaces pose a serious risk to both guests and employees, potentially leading to injuries and costly liability claims.

Owners and operators have a duty of care to ensure that all walking surfaces are properly treated and maintained during inclement weather. This includes timely snow removal, salting or sanding icy areas, and clear signage to alert guests of potential hazards.

By taking preventive measures, you not only protect your guests and staff — you also safeguard your reputation and bottom line.

Who Is Responsible for Parking Area Maintenance?

In the hospitality industry, the responsibility for maintaining sidewalks and parking areas can vary depending on the specific property arrangements. Typically, the property owner or landlord is accountable for ensuring that exterior walkways and parking lots are safe and well-maintained. However, this responsibility may shift based on the terms outlined in lease agreements or other contractual arrangements.

If your landlord is designated as the party responsible for exterior maintenance, it's essential—as a business owner or operator—to proactively communicate any concerns or issues. Common maintenance concerns include potholes, cracked or uneven sidewalks, damaged parking blocks (especially those exposing rebar), and snow or ice accumulation.

To help mitigate risk and ensure a safe environment for guests and staff, maintain clear and documented communication with your landlord regarding any hazards that could lead to injury or property damage. Timely reporting and follow-up are key to fostering a safe and professional relationship while ensuring maintenance issues are promptly addressed.

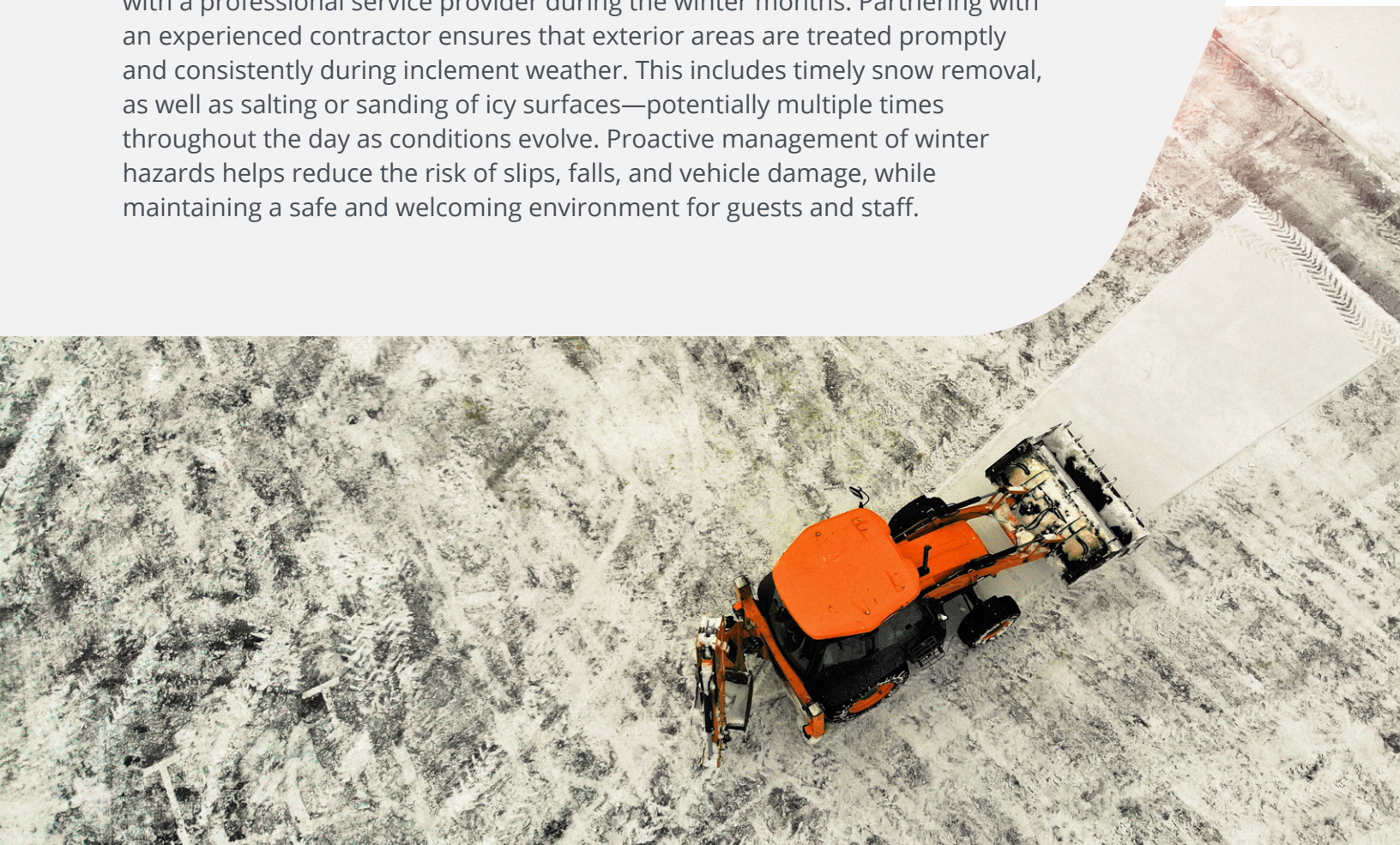


Leased Property or Building Best Practices

- + Franchises may be able to shift responsibility for parking lots, sidewalks or other areas that are common places for slips, trips, and falls to guests and other third parties if a location is leased.
- + It is important to understand the responsibilities of each party to the lease agreement. This includes insurance obligations of the tenant and landlord as well as other responsibilities like maintenance and up-keep of common areas (ex: snow and ice removal), maintenance of equipment, and indemnity provisions that may not allow transfer of liability to another party.
- + There are other agreements outside of a lease that could dictate responsibility as it relates to third-party injury or damages. Consider reviewing all service agreements and contracts with snow and ice removal companies, landscaping contractors, plumbers, electricians or other tradesmen that enter your property. Key areas to review in the agreement include indemnity/warranty statements and insurance requirements/validation of the vendor.
- + If there are any questions as it relates to any lease or vendor agreements, please engage IMA's contractual risk experts prior to execution so language may be suggested to provide contractual protection against assumption of liability for any work that you as the tenant or franchise did not complete or control.

Navigating Winter Risks: When Weather Challenges Exceed Your Control

If snow and ice removal fall under your responsibility, it may be wise to contract with a professional service provider during the winter months. Partnering with an experienced contractor ensures that exterior areas are treated promptly and consistently during inclement weather. This includes timely snow removal, as well as salting or sanding of icy surfaces—potentially multiple times throughout the day as conditions evolve. Proactive management of winter hazards helps reduce the risk of slips, falls, and vehicle damage, while maintaining a safe and welcoming environment for guests and staff.



Snow and Ice Removal Contractor Selection Guide

Supporting Safe and Seamless Winter Operations

Selecting the right contractor to assist your on-site maintenance team is a vital part of your winter weather preparedness strategy. A reliable snow and ice removal partner helps reduce the risk of slip-and-fall incidents and ensures a safe environment for guests and staff. Use this guide to evaluate potential contractors and ensure alignment with your property's operational needs.

1. WINTER SAFETY PROGRAM

- + Does the contractor have a formal Winter Weather Response Plan and a Slip, Trip, and Fall Prevention strategy tailored to commercial properties?

2. INSURANCE VERIFICATION

- + Can the contractor provide current Certificates of Insurance?
- + Do their coverages meet your property's risk management requirements?
- + Consult your insurance advisor if you have questions about adequacy or exclusions.

3. CONTRACT REVIEW

- + Has your legal counsel or insurance contract review team reviewed the proposed agreement?
- + Does the contract clearly define:
 - When services will be initiated (e.g., automatic response vs. on-call)?
 - Specific service expectations and performance standards?

4. EQUIPMENT AND CAPABILITIES

- + What type of equipment does the contractor use?
- + Is it sufficient for the size and layout of your property, including high-traffic guest areas?

5. DEFINED SERVICE AREAS

- + Are all areas requiring snow and ice removal clearly outlined?
- + Will your internal maintenance team handle any zones separately (e.g., entrances, walkways, loading docks)?

6. AVAILABILITY AND RESPONSIVENESS

- + Is the contractor available to meet your operational schedule, especially during early morning hours or shift changes?
- + Can they support 24/7 operations if needed?

7. PARKING LOT MANAGEMENT

- + What is their strategy for clearing snow in active parking areas with frequent vehicle movement or parked vehicles?

8. ICE MELT AND MATERIALS

- + Will the contractor supply their own ice melt or salt/sand mix?
 - If so, does it meet your safety and environmental standards?
 - If not, will they use materials you provide?

9. PRICING AND SERVICE STRUCTURE

- + Request detailed quotes and compare pricing models:
 - Is billing based on individual service calls or a flat seasonal rate?
 - Are there any additional fees for emergency or after-hours service?