



# **Coping with Severe Weather**

## **Guidance to Schools**

November 2013



**Currently, schools and academies receive guidance in relation to their dealing with severe weather from a variety of sources. This document is intended as a single source of information for ease of reference.**

**This document can also be downloaded from the Business Continuity page of the [Central Bedfordshire Schools' Portal](#)**

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# Coping with Severe Weather Guidance to Schools

In Central Bedfordshire, the number of occasions when schools decide to close due to severe weather (normally snow) is very low. However, the impact of such closures on parents, carers and the rest of the school community, even if infrequent, is not to be under-estimated. Accordingly, it is important for all schools to take what steps they can to remain open, whilst recognising that there will be occasions when particular circumstances make closure the only option.

## 1. Department for Education

The Department for Education (DfE) are very clear in their expectations. The following information can be found on the DfE website:

*When it comes to severe weather conditions such as heavy snow, we expect headteachers to keep schools open for as many pupils as possible whenever it is reasonable for them to do so. Closing schools unnecessarily causes disruption to children's education, to their parents and to the economy.*

*It is for individual schools to make any decision to close. They know the local conditions and the contingency possibilities which may allow the school to stay open for some or all pupils. Such decisions should however be based on a common sense approach, having regard to the conditions at the school and the need to continue to provide an education to children whenever feasible.*

### **What about health and safety – is the school site safe?**

*In most cases the headteacher has day to day responsibility for ensuring the health and safety of staff, pupils and visitors. In severe weather conditions such as heavy snow, we expect headteachers to keep schools open for as many pupils as possible whenever it is reasonable for them to do so. The HSE is very clear that **schools should plan ahead and take a sensible and proportionate approach to managing the associated risks**. Closing a school could be a reasonable decision if pupils or staff would face significant risks of serious injury. But in many cases it will be possible to keep a school open, as happens routinely in other countries with more severe winters than ours. Where roads are impassable it becomes a practical issue of access not health and safety considerations.*

### **What about the attendance statistics?**

*Headteachers should not be worried about the impact that remaining open may have on their attendance statistics. In September 2010, we amended the relevant regulations so that, when a pupil cannot get in because of severe weather, the school can mark the register using absence code Y, which means that the pupil's absence will not affect the attendance statistics. However, if the headteacher believes that a child could have got to school, then the child should be recorded as code O – an unauthorised absence.*

## **What if a number of school staff are unable to get in?**

*Schools have the flexibility to work creatively, perhaps bringing together groups and classes with teachers and support staff working together. There are no maximum general pupil-teacher ratios set out in law; with the exception of the infant class size legislation that limits the size of infant classes to 30 or fewer with a qualified teacher for 5, 6 and 7 year olds. The infant class size limit, which includes reception classes, will not apply unless the majority of the children will reach age 5, 6 or 7 in that school year.*

*The infant class size limit does not apply to activities normally carried out in larger groups, for example assemblies, sports and other structured or un-structured activities that the school may choose to provide as part of maintaining a good service.*

## **Disruption to exams**

*Schools should prepare plans for any disruption to examinations as part of their general emergency planning, and ensure that the relevant staff are familiar with these plans. If a headteacher decides to close a school they will discuss alternative arrangements (such as the use for exams of other public buildings nearby) with the relevant awarding organisation. It is the headteacher's responsibility to ensure that parents/carers are kept informed of any decisions.*

*Where a pupil misses an exam because of bad weather the school will discuss contingency plans with the relevant awarding organisations. The action to be taken will aim to safeguard the interests of candidates whilst also maintaining the integrity of the exams. The school is responsible for informing parents and pupils of the actions agreed, which may include the use of alternative venues (e.g. other public buildings nearby); an awarding organisation generating an examination result using evidence of candidates' likely achievement, based on factors such as their performance on other assessments in the same subject; or the opportunity to sit any missed exam later in the year.*

## **2. Communicating School Closures**

If a decision is reached to close a school, it is vitally important to relay this information to parents and to the wider community as soon as is practical. It is therefore essential to have a tried and tested system in place to enable messages to be relayed promptly and efficiently. Most typically, these systems may either be the 'telephone tree' or a texting system such as 'Parentmail'.

Central Bedfordshire schools are also required to communicate any closure via the School Open Status (SOS) system. This is an on line system that all schools are able to access via individual school logins. Exact operational instructions can be found in **Appendix A**.

Registering school closures on the SOS system has the advantage that key agencies are automatically alerted. These include Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC), radio stations, the Schools' Transport Team, Communications Team and any parent who has registered for alerts via the CBC website.

School SOS Administrators will need to inform new parents how to access the SOS system and how to register for alerts. A suggested article for the school newsletter can be found at **Appendix B**.

### 3. Community Resilience

The safety of pupils and staff on the school site in icy conditions is a prime concern of any headteacher. Snow clearance and gritting to make pathways safe is a task often completed in isolation by the Site Manager or Caretaking staff. This is usually at the expense of other vital functions within the school. e.g. setting up for assembly or managing the morning cleaning programme. In extreme cases, schools have not opened because of fears for the safety of individuals as there has not been time to make the school site safe.

Until very recently, there were a number of Health and Safety 'myths' in circulation relating to an individual's liability where an accident has occurred on their property, (or property for which they hold responsibility) following snow clearance. Central Bedfordshire Council provides guidance to its own establishments (which include corporate premises and community/voluntary controlled schools). 'Snow and Ice Clearance at CBC Establishments' can be found at **Appendix C**. It includes a generic risk assessment which may be easily tailored to schools' own arrangements. Non-maintained schools might also wish to follow this guidance.

Schools might like to consider monitoring the readiness of grit boxes in the immediate vicinity of the school. These enable members of the community to salt public roads and paths where there is a particular problem. If you would like to [request the installation of an additional box or the replenishment of an existing box](#), this can be done via the CBC website where you will be asked to create a user account before registering your request.

Schools might also consider the following two ways in which their Site Agent can be supported in making footpaths safe:

#### Parent / Friend Volunteers

Schools might want to consider inviting parents, governors or members of the PTFA to form a snow clearance team. Whilst this prospect may seem daunting, the process is straight forward.

Essentially, a snow clearance team are volunteers and may be managed in the same way as any other volunteers by following this process:

1. Compile a list of parents in advance of winter and formally designate them as volunteers. Volunteers need to be treated in exactly the same way as other members of staff performing the same task (i.e. briefings, provision of equipment etc). Volunteer status will also afford them cover under the employer's liability insurance.
2. Volunteers are issued with guidelines and procedures (e.g. **Appendix D**). They will need to adhere to any snow clearance guidelines in the same way as an employee.
3. On a snowy or icy day, volunteers are registered, briefed and issued with the same equipment as other employees engaged in similar tasks.
4. It is anticipated that no safeguarding issues will arise as a result of this arrangement as snow clearance will usually take place before children arrive. Should clearance work continue into the school day then this will need to be managed in the same way as other on-site volunteers.

5. It would be prudent to confirm arrangements with your school's insurers if insurance is not arranged through Central Bedfordshire Council.

Please note, for Community and Voluntary Controlled schools the employer is Central Bedfordshire Council. The measures described above, correctly managed, are recognised by the Council as 'proportionate and sensible risk management'. The governing bodies of Academies and Voluntary Aided schools would have to be willing to take on and manage the risks associated with volunteers working on their school's grounds.

## Community Emergency Response Teams ( CERTs)

The Bedfordshire and Luton Local Resilience Forum (BLLRF) have recently initiated a programme to encourage communities to develop resilience. As a result, many of our communities in Central Bedfordshire are now looking to set up Community Emergency Response Teams. CERTs have several objectives. One of these is the development of a snow clearance capability using local volunteers. The programme is still in its early stages but to view a list of established CERTs please go to the [BLLRF website](#).

***Please note, if you are able to recruit volunteers through your local CERT, then you must follow the same management procedures listed in the 'Parent / Friend Volunteer' section.***

## 4. Personal Resilience

One of the major reasons for school closures is travelling difficulties encountered by school staff. The following advice is intended to maximise your chances of being able to reach your destination but should be considered in conjunction with reports of local prevailing conditions at the time the journey is undertaken.

- Allow extra time for inevitable delays
- Research your route carefully and be aware of which routes are gritted. Have alternative routes planned as a back up. [A map of local gritting routes](#) can be found on the CBC website
- Be aware of hills or even inclines where bottlenecks frequently occur. Try to avoid these
- If snow is forecast the following day, be prepared to park near to a gritted road in preparation for the journey if access to your own home is likely to be difficult in ice and snow.
- Be equipped for the journey:
  - Road map
  - Additional warm clothing
  - Flask of hot drink and snacks
  - Shovel

Further advice in relation to personal resilience can be found on the '[Severe Weather Advice](#)' page of the CBC website and on the website of the [Bedfordshire and Luton Local Resilience Forum. \(BLLRF\)](#).

For more detailed information please visit the [Highways Agency](#) website.

## School Closure Arrangements

Winter rapidly approaches and with it the threat of disruption caused by bad weather. Now is a good time to rehearse your emergency procedures in relation to unplanned school closures and in particular, re-familiarisation with the SOS (School Open Status) System including the checking of passwords and usernames.

Could I therefore urge headteachers or their delegated member of staff to check that:

1. Staff are able to login at:  
<http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/webApps/SOS/Admin/Login.aspx> A link to the SOS Administration section, together with a guidance document for School Administrators can now be found on the CBC Schools' Portal in the 'Emergency' section under the Administrators tab. If you are unsure of your username and password, please e-mail [sos@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:sos@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)
2. Contact details for staff and school (including e-mail and website addresses) are correct and that former staff accounts are disabled.
3. Staff are familiar with the routine needed for changing your school's status.
4. Arrangements have been communicated to parents (details below).

***Please note that if carrying out a practice of procedures then the 'MORNING / AFTERNOON' tickbox should not actually be unticked as this will automatically send out alerts to recipients including parents and radio stations!.***

### School Closure Procedures

Usually, schools will register their decision to close via the SOS System. This will automatically alert the radio stations, parents (who have registered for alerts) and transport providers of the disruption. Some schools will have additional communication procedures (Parentmail, telephone tree etc). However in the event of an emergency or service disruption where you are **unable to login to SOS** ( e.g. you have a power cut or else the internet is down), you will need to:

1. Telephone Radio Stations. You will be asked for a password. (This was circulated to schools in 2012 . If you require a reminder of your radio station password, please contact [pete.hardy@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:pete.hardy@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk) .)
  - HEART Radio - 01582 676264 or 01582 676240
  - Three Counties Radio - 01582 637444
2. Notify your transport providers directly
3. Notify Central Bedfordshire Council's Schools' Transport team - 0300 300 8167

***Please note that the SOS system refreshes at 5.00pm every day at which point the status of all schools will default to 'open'. Do not attempt to change the status for your school to 'closed' before 5.00pm on the preceding evening.***



## Suggested article for school's newsletter

### Communication with parents

*Could schools ensure that parents are informed (e.g. via your newsletter) with regard to:*

#### 1. Using SOS to register to receive alerts.

In order to receive an e-mail alert via the Central Bedfordshire Schools' Open Status (SOS) system, you will need to register:

- Click on the following link: <http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/webApps/SOS>
- Click on 'register for updates' and fill in the text boxes
- Click on 'submit'

You will then receive an email which contains instructions on how to 'activate' your account which will include a 'one off' activation code:

- Click on the link: <http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/webApps/SOS/>
- Go to 'Log in to edit your details' and type in your email address and the activation code.
- The next time you want to edit your details (e.g change the names of schools you wish to receive alerts for), type in your email address and password.

2. **Contact with radio stations.** Please can you also stress to parents **NOT** to try to ring the radio station to find out if their school is closed. Telephone lines will be busy and they may prevent a vital call reaching the News Centre. They need instead to listen to the radio or access the website.

3. **Lost passwords.** If a parent has an existing account but has lost their log – in details they will need to send an e-mail to [sos@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:sos@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk) to have these details refreshed.

***For more detailed information, please follow the 'User Guide' link on the SOS homepage***



# Snow and Ice Clearance At CBC Establishments

October 2013 edition, 23.10.2013

***The following document has been written by Central Bedfordshire's Corporate Health and Safety Team. It is a requirement that Community and Voluntary Controlled schools adhere to this advice. The governing bodies of non-maintained schools ( academies, voluntary aided and foundation trusts) may chose whether to adopt this advice.***

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 During winter each year, many staff and members of the public may be at increased risk of personal injury as a consequence of slipping and falling on ice and snow.
- 1.2 The Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 and the Occupiers' Liability Acts of 1957 and 1984 place a responsibility upon the employer, so far as is reasonably practicable, that the means of access and egress from its premises are maintained in a condition that is safe and without risk to either its employees or other persons.
- 1.3 The approved code of practice which supports the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992 states that "Arrangements should be made to minimise risks from snow and ice. This may involve gritting, snow clearing and closure of some routes, particularly outside stairs, ladders and walkways on roofs."
- 1.4 It is a popular misconception that an occupier cannot be held liable for failing to clear snow / ice, but can be held liable once an attempt at clearance has been made and then someone is injured. The true position is that an occupier can be held liable for 'failing to act reasonably' in order to prevent accidents.
- 1.5 Heads of establishments are responsible for ensuring that the means of access to their premises is safe for both employees and visitors and that adequate arrangements are made to ensure that the risks from snow and ice are minimised. It is recognised that it is not possible to immediately all snow or ice. It does, however, require those responsible for premises to exercise careful judgement and prioritise de-icing and salting of key access routes.
- 1.6 All reasonable efforts should be made to ensure that the establishment remains open as normal.
- 1.7 Establishments should follow the guidance for severe weather events on [http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/weather/uk/ee/ee\\_forecast\\_weather.html](http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/weather/uk/ee/ee_forecast_weather.html) that culminate in closure.

## **2.0 RISK ASSESSMENT AND PREMISES SNOW AND ICE PLAN**

- 2.1 Premises managers must ensure that a risk assessment is in place, which covers the hazards associated with snow and ice on their premises. A generic risk assessment covering snow and ice is provided in section 4.
- 2.2 A premises-specific snow and ice plan should be prepared to outline how snow and ice will be dealt with on the premises. The following recommendations are provided as a guide to typical arrangements which should be in place. The premises manager is responsible for reviewing and revising the arrangements.
  - Staff to be aware of their duties and responsibilities. It may be necessary for site staff to start work earlier on a particular day to commence the gritting and snow/ice clearance plan.
  - Adequate equipment and materials should be available (including salt /grit and equipment to safely spread them).
  - Determine which access routes are the most used / important.
    - Clear a path 1 metre wide from the site entrance to the main building entrance. Pathways leading from car parks to buildings, slopes and steps on route should be regarded as a priority.

- Treat cleared paths with salt/grit to maintain a clear pathway especially where temperatures remain below freezing.
  - As time permits, other pathways to entrances and between buildings should be cleared and gritted.
  - Appropriate checks should be made to ensure continued safety.
  - Identify any particularly dangerous areas which require extra care and should be checked / treated more frequently e.g. steps, slopes, gullies which may be hidden etc.
  - Consider the needs of any visitors with particular needs (older people, disabled people etc.)
  - Ensure that fire evacuation routes from the building are cleared.
- 2.3 Where the premises manager has concerns over the safety of certain external pathways, circulation routes, etc, it may be appropriate for affected areas to be taken out of use. If this is the case this must be marked clearly using signs/cones/tape to ensure everyone is made aware.
- 2.4 All staff should be aware of the risk assessment in place for snow and ice and take responsibility for following the designated paths and access routes when such conditions exist.

### 3.0 **SNOW AND ICE CLEARANCE METHODS**

There's no law stopping anyone from clearing snow and ice on the pavement in public spaces or on their own premises. It's unlikely you'll be sued or held legally responsible for any injuries on the path if you have cleared it carefully. Follow the snow code when clearing snow and ice safely.

#### **Prevent slips**

- Pay extra attention to clear snow and ice from steps and steep pathways - you might need to use more salt on these areas.
- If you clear snow and ice yourself, be careful - don't make the pathways more dangerous by causing them to refreeze. But don't be put off clearing paths because you're afraid someone will get injured.
- Remember, people walking on snow and ice have responsibility to be careful themselves. Follow the advice below to make sure you clear the pathway safely and effectively.

#### **Clear the snow or ice early in the day**

- It's easier to move fresh, loose snow rather than hard snow that has packed together from people walking on it. So if possible, start removing the snow and ice in the morning. If you remove the top layer of snow in the morning, any sunshine during the day will help melt any ice beneath. You can then cover the path with salt before nightfall to stop it refreezing overnight.

#### **Use salt or sand - not water**

- If you use water to melt the snow, it may refreeze and turn to black ice. Black ice increases the risk of injuries as it is invisible and very slippery. You can prevent black ice by spreading some salt on the area you have cleared. You can use

ordinary table or dishwasher salt - a tablespoon for each square metre you clear should work. Premises should arrange for suitable stocks of salt or grit to be available, however. Don't use the salt found in salting bins on public roads - this will be needed to keep the roads clear.

- Be careful not to spread salt on plants or grass as it may cause them damage.
- If you don't have enough salt, you can also use sand or ash. These won't stop the path icing over as well as salt, but will provide good grip under foot.

#### **Take care where you move the snow**

- When you're shovelling snow, take care where you put it so it doesn't block people's paths or drains. Make sure you make a path down the middle of the area to be cleared first, so you have a clear surface to walk on. Then shovel the snow from the centre of the path to the sides.

## **4.0 GENERIC RISK ASSESSMENT**

A generic risk assessment is provided overleaf.

You may **review and tailor** the contents of the generic risk assessment to meet the individual circumstances of your activities and workplace. Please note:

- The assessment provides suggested general precautions for a range of issues which will not suit all circumstances but may help you to formulate a suitable approach.
- The generic assessment assumes that you have all recommended precautions in place. Actions that you determine are required but which are not yet in place should be moved from the 'What are you already doing?' column to the 'What further action is necessary?' column and action to complete them assigned to an appropriate manager or member of staff.
- Delete out hazards and precautions which do not apply and include any additional hazards and precautions required.

<b>RISK ASSESSMENT</b> Snow and Ice Clearance		What are you risk assessing? Put in brief outline of the task/activity. Snow and ice clearance arrangements	
<b>Establishment:</b>		<b>Assessment by:</b> Generic assessment provided by CBC Corporate Health and Safety Team, included as part of snow and ice clearance guidance of 23 October 2013.	<b>Date:</b> Generic prepared 8.10.2013
<b>Risk assessment number/ref:</b> Add reference no. if you wish>> <b>RA-xxx</b>		<b>Manager Approval:</b>	<b>Date:</b>

Use this form to record the significant findings of your risk assessment and detail any action required to reduce risk further, where existing actions (control measures) are insufficient.

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already doing?	What further action is necessary?	Action by who?	Action by when?	Done
Management of snow and ice build up on premises	Staff, visitors and contractors could fall due to slippery surfaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Person(s) identified who will be responsible for the management of snow and ice clearance and they are suitably briefed and trained as required.</li> <li>Person responsible for the building is aware of the limits of the property, including restrictions on shared premises, public rights of way etc.</li> <li>Responsible person is aware and understands CBC snow and ice guidance (located in the Health and Safety section of the CBC intranet and schools portal).</li> <li>Specific snow and ice plan for the premises is in place, identifying areas and routes required to be cleared to ensure safe access and operation of the premises.</li> <li>Resources identified and available to ensure the snow and ice plan can be implemented.</li> <li>Areas and routes to be 'out of bounds' are cordoned off (for example, areas beneath overhanging roof eaves where snow might fall, hazardous walkways etc).</li> <li>Cleared areas for use by pedestrians or vehicle access and are frequently reviewed for any changes in condition.</li> <li>Snow and ice cleared to suitable locations, avoiding</li> </ul>				

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already doing?	What further action is necessary?	Action by who?	Action by when?	Done
		obstructions and blockage of drains. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adequate stocks of salt/grit obtained in preparation for snow and ice clearance activities.</li> <li>• Weather forecast is checked and salt/grit applied <b>prior</b> to a predicted freeze.</li> <li>• All staff are encouraged to wear appropriate flat soled and sturdy footwear and to carry as little as possible when walking in the building's grounds and car park.</li> <li>• Mats are used in entrance ways.</li> <li>• Any water trodden into the buildings by staff, visitors and contractors is monitored/mopped up to prevent slips and falls.</li> <li>• Arrangements are communicated and made available to all staff, contractors and visitors as appropriate.</li> </ul>				
Working in cold and slippery conditions whilst gritting and/or clearing snow and ice	Staff, visitors and contractors could fall due to slippery surfaces or suffer physical injuries from manual handling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The overall wellbeing and physical capabilities of the person(s) gritting or clearing the site are sufficient for the task in hand.</li> <li>• Suitable warm clothing is worn (coat, gloves, trousers), along with suitable sturdy footwear and high-visibility vest/jacket.</li> <li>• The time spent on activities is limited to a reasonable duration - regular breaks taken, several people assist rather than just one etc.</li> <li>• Warm drinks available during breaks.</li> <li>• Working in extreme weather conditions is avoided e.g. if snowing heavily at the time.</li> <li>• Working alone avoided where practicable and if not possible, their work location known and regular contact maintained.</li> </ul>				
Manual Handling and working in proximity to	Staff - risk of back injuries, falling over or being hit by a moving vehicle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manual Handling risk assessment in place and all staff aware of it.</li> <li>• Staff are aware of correct manual handling techniques</li> </ul>				

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already doing?	What further action is necessary?	Action by who?	Action by when?	Done
vehicles		for handling rock salt, shovelling snow etc. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vehicle areas such as car parks are cordoned off from vehicle access when being cleared (cordon by section being gritted or cleared if unable to complete prior to start of working day).</li> <li>• High-visibility jackets are worn and staff to remain constantly vigilant of vehicle movements.</li> <li>• Building users made aware of areas 'out of bounds' / not being cleared of snow.</li> <li>• Building users reminded to drive safely, to clear car windows fully for visibility and to switch on headlights.</li> </ul>				
Work equipment – faulty, inappropriate for task or incorrect use	Staff could injure themselves if equipment is faulty or they are not properly trained	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appropriate equipment is provided, e.g. snow shovels and equipment for spreading grit, such as spreading trolleys. If buckets and hand shovels are used, buckets are not overloaded so that they may be lifted safely.</li> <li>• Staff trained to use equipment as appropriate.</li> <li>• A competent member of staff visually inspects and assesses the materials and tools being used to confirm they are in good condition, fit for purpose and appropriate for the task in hand.</li> <li>• Equipment is in good condition and maintained in line with manufacturers' instructions.</li> </ul>				
Hazardous substances	Dermatitis or skin damage arising from contact with rock salt / grit or ill health effects arising from incorrect use of other chemicals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gloves worn when handling rock salt and grit.</li> <li>• Other substances (such as de-icers) if determined as required are subject to appropriate and proportionate level of 'COSHH' assessment and control before use.</li> </ul>				
Volunteers assisting with snow and ice clearance	Members of the public such as parents, school children and other service users at risk as per other hazards in this assessment. Safeguarding of children and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All volunteers to be provided with site induction and formally recorded as a volunteer for the purposes of snow and ice clearance.</li> <li>• Premises to confirm their employer and public liability insurance covers them for the use of volunteers.</li> </ul>				



What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already doing?	What further action is necessary?	Action by who?	Action by when?	Done
	vulnerable adults.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishment to implement appropriate safeguarding protocols for children and vulnerable adults as appropriate.</li> <li>• All precautions identified in this risk assessment to be applied to volunteers in the same manner as for staff.</li> </ul>				

**Assessment review date:** [dd / mm / 20yy] (usually within one year, or earlier in the event of incident, a change in conditions or if more frequent review is warranted)

**Health and safety guidance and information is available on the Intranet**

## Volunteer Briefing Notes

***Schools might like to consider issuing briefing notes to their volunteers. These should reflect the specific risk assessment undertaken by the school. (See Appendix C). Your briefing notes might be similar to the example included below but please note this is a generic example applicable to a broad spectrum of organisations and not a definitive list for school volunteers.***

### Volunteer Health and Safety Brief (Generic)

Anyone clearing snow on behalf of the town or parish council would be covered under the terms of Central Bedfordshire Council's insurance for public liabilities providing volunteers have registered with their town or parish council, and read and understood the following health and safety points.

Anyone clearing snow from outside their own property or someone else's property would only be liable for an accident if their efforts actually made the pavement less safe than it was with the snow and ice undisturbed and as a result somebody is injured.

Volunteers spreading salt / grit for clearing snow from the highway at times of severe weather should:

- Wear a high visibility long sleeved vest or jacket. A vest can be worn over normal clothing. A jacket can be worn in place of a normal coat.
- Wear warm clothing and stout footwear which will provide a good grip. Physical work will warm up the body so be prepared to shed layers, but remember that your body will quickly cool down once you cease working.
- Ensure that someone is aware that you have gone out to carry out this work and how long you intend to be there for. Remember also to advise that person of your return.
- Assess the location before commencing work. Do not attempt to work if you feel conditions would make this unsafe - for example, if visibility is poor, traffic flows are too high or conditions are so severe that you would be placing yourself at risk of falling or extreme cold.
- Always be aware of approaching traffic. Remember the conditions may mean that traffic will have difficulty stopping. Try to work in pairs so that someone can observe the traffic.
- Use the grit sparingly and thinly. Spread a small amount on a shovel and sprinkle gently. The material in the grit bins is a mixture of salt and grit. The salt will help to speed up the process of thawing snow and ice. The grit is intended to provide grip on the surface of compacted snow or ice.

- When spreading salt/grit on the pavements it is better to remove most of the snow and then spread the salt/grit mixture.
- If shovelling snow, use a shovel with the widest blade available. Make a line down the middle of your path first so you have a safe surface to walk on. Then you can simply shovel the snow from the centre to the sides.
- Care should be taken to avoid blocking access points to properties, driveways, paths (especially at pedestrian crossings and drains). The cleared snow should be deposited in the verge or areas that are non-trafficked.
- Use salt or sand – not water. If you use water to melt the snow, it may refreeze and turn to black ice. Black ice increases the risk of injuries as it is invisible and very slippery. If salt is not available from the grit bins, you can use ordinary table or dishwasher salt - a tablespoon for each square meter you clear should work. But avoid spreading on plants or grass.
- Do not be put off clearing paths because you are afraid someone will get injured. Remember, people walking on snow and ice have a responsibility to be careful themselves.
- Pay extra attention to clear snow and ice from steps and steep pathways – you might need to use more salt on these areas.
- Clear the snow or ice early in the day. It's easier to move fresh, loose snow rather than hard snow that has been packed together from people walking on it. So if possible, start removing the snow and ice in the morning. If you remove the top layer of snow in the morning, any sunshine during the day will help melt any ice beneath. You can cover the path with salt before nightfall to stop it refreezing overnight.

This guidance was produced by Central Bedfordshire's 'Resilience Group for Schools and other Settings'. If you need to make contact with regard to its content please send an e-mail to [pete.hardy@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:pete.hardy@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

## Contact us...

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