

Clearing snow & ice yourself 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.

Q1. Will I be held liable if someone falls on a path I have cleared?

In 2015 a new 'Good Samaritan' law ('SARAH' - Social Action, Responsibility and Heroism Act) came into effect in England and Wales. See:

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2015/3/contents/enacted>

This act seeks to counteract the growing perception that people risk being successfully sued if they do something for the common good – like leading a school trip, organising a village fete, clearing snow from a path in front of their home or helping in an emergency situation.

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 a responsibility to be careful themselves.

Q2. What can I do to help clear snow and ice from pavements and public spaces?

10 practical tips are given below. This is not a comprehensive list – use common sense:

- **Start early:** it is much easier to remove fresh, loose snow compared to compacted ice that has been compressed by people walking on it.
- **Remember to dress warmly** and wear clothes and footwear suited to the conditions. Take frequent breaks and stop before feeling tired.
- **Do not use water to clear snow.** This will melt the snow, but may replace it with black ice, increasing the risk of injury.
- **Do not attempt to clear roads**, where cars and other vehicles may be attempting to drive – it is very dangerous and you may cause an accident not just to yourself, but others too.
- **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.

Q3. Where can I find out more information about what I can do in an emergency?

You can get more details about Essex County Council's Winter Programme, including details of gritted routes and salt bin locations, on the Essex County Council website. See: <http://www.essexhighways.org/transport-and-roads/Roads-and-Pavements/winter-travel.aspx>

The Preparing for Emergencies web pages on the UK Government's website (see <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/preparing-for-emergencies/preparing-for-emergencies>) contains useful information on how you can prepare for the impacts of all emergencies.

See more about Essex Highways Winter Services at:

<http://www.essexhighways.org/transport-and-roads/Roads-and-Pavements/winter-travel.aspx>