

# Don't take a gamble this winter

It's never too early to get the ball rolling ...

Put your winter maintenance solutions in play now

## The real costs of not putting an effective winter maintenance programme in place

### The cost of ice and snow claims

Ice and snow claims range from a few thousand pounds to tens of thousands of pounds, and even to hundreds of thousands of pounds – depending on the severity of the injuries and the impact on the Claimant's work and daily living.

The costs can soon add up as Claimants can claim compensation not only for the actual injuries suffered but also for any loss of earnings they have incurred or will incur in the future and any care and assistance they require because of their injuries.

This can include:

- Help washing and dressing
- Help around the home

### Other areas of compensation can include:

- Any private medical expenditure (e.g. surgery, physiotherapy, rehabilitation)
- Any prescription charges/medication costs
- Any travel expenses (e.g. attending medical appointments) etc.

Legal costs also need to be added on top, which can themselves run into many thousands of pounds.

### The stress and inconvenience of claims

There is also the time, inconvenience and stress of organisations having to deal with the claims, provide documents, allow employees to attend court as witnesses etc.

### Reputational damage

Then there is the potential bad publicity and damage to reputation which accidents and claims can cause.

### Avoiding ice and snow claims

The key to avoiding/reducing accidents and claims, and successfully defending any claims which are brought is to risk assess and implement a thorough system of winter maintenance and gritting.

There should be evidence of a comprehensive winter maintenance system which is rigorously adhered to and enforced during times of severe weather.

Having such a programme in place and then choosing not to use it on a particular occasion can also have a detrimental impact. Organisations need to devise a system of winter maintenance and implement it.

### About De-ice ([www.de-ice.co.uk](http://www.de-ice.co.uk))

De-ice is one of the UK's longest-established and leading winter gritting and snow clearance specialists.

The company provides winter maintenance services, helping to keep businesses, hospitals, schools and retail outlets safe and open during extreme weather.

De-ice is focused on ensuring customers' sites are made safe and remain open during periods of adverse weather. It has the latest gritting equipment and expertly trained operatives.

The company has built a bespoke technology system which monitors the weather and triggers service delivery alerts. The system then tracks operatives through their PDAs, to gauge whether service delivery has taken place.

In the event of a possible claim, De-ice customers can rely on an extensive service audit trail in order to evidence that a site or an area was fully serviced.



### Case studies

The following provide examples of real claims that occurred, as a result of wintry weather. Names haven't been provided for reasons of client confidentiality.

#### Example claim I

A company was facing a very large number of claims from employees and members of the public who had slipped on ice in car parks and on walkways which had not been properly gritted or treated.

The claims had to be settled because there was no adequate winter maintenance 'system'. The aggregate value (i.e. combined cost) of the settled cases exceeded £1m.

#### Example claim II

A fireman slipped walking across an icy car park at his place of work. The car park had not been gritted, salted or otherwise treated so as to make it safe for employees or other visitors.

The fireman injured his back and was ill-health retired out of the service as a result. He was unable to return to physical work. His claim was settled for a six figure sum, including his past and future loss of earnings.

## **What takes place before you can service our site?**

We'll visit your site to complete a full site survey, a risk assessment and method statement. We'll put together a gritting and snow clearance plan. Once we have a signed contract and you're added to our system you'll be ready for service.

## **When will you grit?**

We attend your site to grit whenever the agreed trigger temperature is forecast for your site. We receive daily forecasts at 1200 hrs and service between 1800 hrs and 0700 hrs.

## **Where do you get your forecasts?**

DE-ICE will always work with an independent professional weather provider. We select our weather partner(s) specifically for their forecast offering and excellence in predicting frost, ice and snow. De-ice has no influence over the forecasts produced.

## **What type of salt or grit do you use and why?**

We use white marine salt. Unlike rock salt, which is mined like coal and is made up of several properties, marine salt is renewable, pure white and doesn't stain interior surfaces. Although it's more expensive, it's also about 10% more effective than rock salt, providing advantages that easily outweigh the additional cost.

## **How does salt work?**

Salt works as a de-icer by lowering the freezing point of water, an effect known as "freezing point depression." To achieve this it needs to dissolve. This is achieved by crushing the salt crystals, the salt draws moisture from the surface and the air forming a brine solution. It is most effective when applied prior to the temperature of the surface dropping below zero degrees. In the most extreme conditions (below -9° centigrade), salt can become less effective and it may be more beneficial to use other materials to give traction upon the ice as opposed to a de-icer.

## **Does the salt cause damage to my site and landscaping?**

The use of salt has no direct effect upon roads, road markings, tarmac or concrete (without metal reinforcing) surfaces or linings. It is the ingress of water into porous surfaces and subsequent freezing that would possibly cause the damage. The application of salt will reduce the likelihood of damage however, metal work can be damaged by salt. Salt can be harmful to plants. We take every possible care to ensure that salt is kept away from your landscaping. In accordance with our ISO14001 certification for Environmental Management, all operators are highly trained and provided with the best equipment to spread salt accurately and only where it is required.

## **How soon will we have somebody on our site should we call you out during the day?**

We work to a Service Level Agreement of 4-6 hours. However, we aim to get to you as quickly as possible and will confirm an estimated time of arrival when you book the site visit.

## **What is the procedure if there is an accident (slip, fall, or vehicular accident) that I suspect is because of ice?**

Tend to any injured party as appropriate in accordance with your own company health and safety procedure. Consider restricting access to an area you feel maybe unsafe, capture the details of all parties and the incident, including photographs and witness statements wherever possible. Advise us immediately that you are aware of any incident and discuss with your account manager if an additional service is necessary. We will advise you of an estimated time of arrival and keep you updated. On arrival, our representative will report to you and work with you to complete the process of making sure the site is in a safe condition and that all details have been recorded accurately. We will confirm what service was scheduled for your site and provide you with the details of the service delivered. When the above has been completed, you are advised to notify your insurers. We will do the same, making available all of the relevant service information. If any injured party raises a claim as a result of the incident, we must both advise our insurers at the time. We accept complete responsibility for our service and any claim made against us for any alleged failure in our service will be addressed by our insurers. We will keep you informed of any developments.

## **How do you clear snow?**

We clear snow differently according to the needs of the area. Manual Snow Clearance is most commonly used for footpaths and pedestrian routes from car parks and areas around the perimeter of a building. Mechanical Snow Clearance is most commonly used to clear access roads, car parks and service areas. Typically, we use vehicle mounted snow ploughs, JCB's, quad bikes, snow brushes.

## **How do you decide whether to clear snow?**

Snow fall, the timing of and the volume are one of the hardest things to forecast and as a De-ice customer we formulate a snow clearance procedure that is bespoke to your site needs and budget. So if a totally proactive approach based on forecasting fits the bill then fine but if you want to call us in as necessary then that's fine too. If your site has been gritted effectively the salt should clear snowfalls of 4-5 cms.

## **How do you make sure my specific requirements and any special instructions are communicated to your operators?**

All site specific information and any special instructions are updated in our Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system and are automatically sent to each operator on each night of service via their mobile reporting devices.

## **Can I cancel a scheduled gritting attendance?**

Not on a day by day basis as you would risk your liability – just as you're not able to switch car and public liability insurance on and off. The service is delivered whenever it is required for the full period of the contract. However, if your site is closed during a holiday period let us know at the beginning of your contract and we will suspend service for that period.

## **What if I need you to visit in the daytime?**

No problem, provided you have a contract. Just call us on 0345 2413020. We provide gritting and snow clearance services 24 hours a day, subject to the response times as detailed in our Service Level Agreement.