

# Extreme Winter Weather; 10 Quick Safety & Preparedness Tips for Condo Managers

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**Condo** management & building staff all have unique roles and responsibilities in keeping residents and visitors safe during extreme weather conditions. Being proactive is the key to avoiding potential safety issues.

Here are some useful tips that outline steps that management can take:

**Be safe.** Your building is a workplace and, under the Occupational Health & Safety Act, workplace supervisors are required to brief your workers (onsite building staff) on the risks of extreme winter weather. The briefing should address your building's unique circumstances, include a review of Personal Protective Equipment available to staff, and include procedures for staff safety.

**Is your building ready?** Typically, in advance of extreme weather, inspections should occur to ensure that the emergency generator fuel supply is full, and that salt and other de-icing materials are readily available. Local and perimeter storm drains should be made free from debris, snow and leaf build up. These steps can prevent or significantly mitigate downstream emergencies and costs due to ponding, flooding and rapid melt.

**Slips, trips, and falls.** During winter weather, building security & operations personnel should monitor walkways with an inspection program. The inspection program should document the status of the main walkways and any prevention & mitigation efforts applied, such as shoveling or the application of salt and or sand. Remember, salt only works at certain temperatures. Depending on where your building is located, it may be more suitable for sand or other materials. The inspection program should be documented several times per day, allowing the building owner and staff proof of an active program to defend against any claims. As a best practice, many GTA condos take photographs several times per day, documenting that no trip or fall hazards exist, using [Safe Buildings](#). This technology is inexpensive and provides a high ROI, and allows you digitally track any inspection program in minutes.

**Keep the fire routes and walkways clear of snow.** Connect with your snow-removal service provider to ensure your building remains a priority for any snow clearing. Review your service contract to refresh recollection of deliverables and timing requirements. During major storms,

you might not be able to rely on your contractor or service provider. Be sure your building has an adequate emergency supply of shovels, and de-icing materials.

**Don't forget the exit paths!** Front walkways should be constantly monitored to ensure they are safe from slip, trip, or fall hazards, and they remain clear of snow and ice buildup. Building owners have responsibilities above and beyond the front entrance walkway. Exterior stairwells leading from parking garages need to be clear of snow. Sometimes, the stairwells are forgotten but they are emergency exits and must be clear at all times.

**In Ontario, during cold weather, building owners are required to inspect the sprinkler/fire pump room for proper temperature.** If the building loses heat in the preceding areas, the systems might freeze. Ensure staff is inspecting the room daily, and documenting the inspection and any challenges to its heating. This is an important part of the building's risk management program.

**Maintain security & inspect your perimeter doors.** Snow and salt buildup around perimeter doors can lead to unsecured doors, doors not properly closing, and to illegitimate access of the building. Ensure your teams are inspecting these doors frequently and documenting that the building perimeter is secure.

**Falling ice signs - stock available.** The potential for falling ice from roofs, awnings, eaves, etc., is high. To effectively communicate the hazard to visitors and occupants, warning signs need to be ready to be deployed when needed. Placing the signs inside and outside provides the best communication effort.

**Power failures are likely during major storms.** Ensure that your staff is equipped with flashlights. Ensure batteries are charged and readily available. Ensure your security and concierge teams review their emergency procedures for power failures, including any emergency communications to occupants via the building's emergency voice communications system.

**Clear snow from all fire hydrants and fire department connections.** Be sure your snow contractor and/or building staff are keeping these vital life-safety components clear of snow and ice accumulation. It is imperative that these systems always remain clear to assist and support occupant safety.

**Keep the lights on during reduced visibility!** While most condos have an active exterior lighting inspection program, it's a good step, in advance of winter weather, to inspect exterior lights on the building perimeter and parking lots at night. Doing so allows a condominium corporation to mitigate or prevent slips, trips, and falls, and have the evidence to prove its efforts.

We hope you find the above quick tips useful. We also want to acknowledge and thank all of the front-line staff at every building for their efforts in keeping us safe and secure.