

Cambridge Snow FAQ

For People with Disabilities, their Friends and Families

1/7/2013

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1. PROPERTY OWNERS

Why do property owners have to remove snow and ice from the sidewalk?

One of the obligations for property owners is to provide safe passage for pedestrians on the sidewalk(s) adjacent to their private property and bordering on a street.

The relevant regulations for this City Ordinance in Cambridge are listed under **Chapter 12.16.1100 - STREET AND SIDEWALK USE REGULATIONS, Snow and Ice Removal.**

Do people with disabilities and/or seniors have to clear their sidewalks?

Yes. Seniors and people with disabilities *who are property owners* are required to clear snow and ice from their sidewalks. However, the City will shovel their sidewalk if they qualify for the City's **Snow Exemption Program** (see below).

How soon does ICE need to be removed?

The City Ordinance requires property owners to remove ice within six (6) hours from the time it forms.

How soon to remove SNOW?

Within twelve (12) hours after snow stops falling during the day, and before 1 pm if it snowed during the night. This includes snow falling from buildings.

Who enforces the ordinance?

The Department of Public Works (DPW) and the Traffic, Parking and Transportation (TP&T) Department enforce the Ordinance. Parking Control Officers for the Traffic Department conduct enforcement on priority pedestrian routes throughout the winter, and Public Works

Compliance Officers investigate all complaints received of sidewalks not cleared.

Is there a fine?

Yes. The fine is **\$50 each day** for property owners who fail to comply with the City's sidewalk snow/ice clearance ordinance. Even if you are not around, it is your responsibility to ensure someone clears the sidewalks and ramps next to your property.

As a property owner, how can I make sure I am in compliance with the Ordinance?

- Shovel the sidewalk on all sides of your property, down to bare pavement
- Make the path wide enough for someone using wheelchair, walker or stroller (at least 3 feet, preferably 4 feet).
- Clear ramps at corners and crosswalks.
- Stock up on ice melter before a storm. Use ice melter with calcium chloride (CaCl_2), which is the best choice for the environment and only a small amount is required to melt ice. Potassium chloride (KCl) is okay, too. Avoid rock salt (NaCl or sodium chloride), which kills plants and trees.
- Do not use sand. It does not help pedestrians and it makes hard ice more slippery. Sand also gets into street drains and is expensive to clean up in the spring.
- For pedestrians, ice can cause dangerous falls and can be worse than snow. Property owners are responsible for both ice and snow.
- Keep street drains clear of snow to avoid ponding and icing at the bottom of ramps.
- Pedestrians need safe, clear sidewalks all year long, so be mindful of anything—hedges, trees, parked cars— that obstructs their path of travel.

- Consider helping neighbors who may have difficulty clearing their walk. Keeping sidewalks passable is the neighborly thing to do, and [it's the law.](#)

2. HOW TO REPORT UNCLEARED SIDEWALKS

How can I report an uncleared sidewalk?

There are three ways to report a sidewalk that is not shoveled:

- 1) Use the DPW online reporting form on the DPW Snow page at www.cambridgema.gov/snow or
- 2) Or download the Cambridge iReport app to your smartphone (available from the iTunes store and Android Marketplace). This allows you to make reports while on-the-go, and to attach a photo if you like. You may also check the status of your complaint(s) within the app. Visit www.cambridgema.gov/iReport.aspx for more info.
- 3) Call the DPW Snow Hotline at (617) 349-4903

What happens once I make a report?

All reports will be inspected by Traffic Dept. or DPW staff and a ticket will be issued to the property owner if found to be in violation of the Snow Ordinance.

3. WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR CLEARING OTHER AREAS?

Who clears the areas not connected to personal property?

The Department of Public Works clears over 18 miles of sidewalk areas including those around schools, public buildings, parks and high volume bus stops.

The Traffic Department concentrates on clearing all City owned parking lots, garages, and the sidewalks and walkways surrounding them.

The City shares responsibility with the MBTA in clearing bus stops. If you have questions or concerns about specific stops, please contact DPW, their contact information is listed at the end of this FAQ.

What pedestrian areas will the City clear?

The areas surrounding City buildings, major squares including Harvard, Central and Porter, and sidewalks and pathways surrounding City parks. *For more details, please go to [City Responsibilities](#).*

4. SNOW EXEMPTION PROGRAM

What is the snow exemption program?

Cambridge operates a Snow Exemption Program for seniors and people with disabilities who are low-income homeowners who can document that they are unable to shovel their sidewalks because of physical limitations, and have no other members of their household that are able to do so.

Who is eligible for the snow exemption program?

Low-income homeowners who are elderly and/or have a disability

- All residents of the household must be either over 60 or disabled.
- Live in a single family home*
- Have a maximum income of \$24,838 for a one-person household or \$35,145 for a household of two or more (as of 2012)**
- Documentation must be provided certifying the inability of the homeowner to shovel own snow and documentation of income, too.

** Some special cases may apply*

*** Guidelines are set by the Executive Office of Elder Affairs and typically increase each January.*

How do I find out if I am eligible for the snow exemption program?

The Cambridge Council on Aging has a one-page *Snow Exemption Application*. Call (617) 349-6220 voice or (617) 349-6050 TTY.

What happens once I am found eligible?

Once a Cambridge homeowner is approved for the Snow Exemption Program, Recreation Staff of the Department of Human Service Programs will clear the homeowner's sidewalk. Personal property will not be shoveled -- just the sidewalk (after public roadways, schools, and public buildings are cleared).

What if I am not eligible?

The Council on Aging has a list of professional snow removal companies you can contact directly and negotiate a price, and a list of students who also want to earn money by shoveling.

5. EMERGENCY PARKING BANS

What is an emergency parking ban?

Some streets in Cambridge have a temporary ban imposed when a snow emergency is declared. This includes barring cars and vehicles from parking on the designated street in order to make access for snow removal and emergency vehicles.

Does an emergency parking ban apply to people with disabilities?

Yes. Anyone who owns a car that is parked on a street that has been marked as a Snow Emergency street must relocate the vehicle elsewhere or that vehicle may be towed, regardless of whether or not it is displaying a valid disability parking placard, permit or tag. The City will permit free parking in the Green Street Garage or the First Street Garage while a Snow Emergency parking ban is in effect.

How can I find out if the City has declared an emergency parking ban?

Information is available at:

- (617) 349-4700
- The City's homepage at www.cambridgema.gov
- City TV-8 (Channel 8 on Comcast cable)

- CodeRED Notification Service - snow emergency messaging

What is the CodeRED Notification Service?

CodeRED is a free service that the City uses to contact residents in the case of emergencies. In the case of snow emergencies, the City will send residents an email or text message to their cell phones when the City declares a snow emergency.

How do I sign up?

Visit www.cambridgema.gov/alertnetwork to sign up for CodeRED and other City notification services.

Hasn't the City already determined which streets prohibit parking during a snow emergency?

Yes. There is a list and map of streets where parking is prohibited during a snow emergency on the Traffic Department's website: www.cambridgema.gov/Traffic. This website also has information on the parking garages that provide free parking during a declared snow emergency.

6. CITY RESPONSIBILITIES

What does the City do to keep sidewalks and ramps clear during the snow season?

The Department of Public Works (DPW) will clear sidewalks and ramps around City-owned property. Operation starts during storm, can continue for days or weeks after storm, and involves hand crews and mechanical equipment.

Locations include sidewalks and ramps:

- Abutting schools; public buildings
- Major squares, including Harvard, Central, Porter, Kendall, and Lechmere Squares
- Abutting all parks including Fresh Pond and Danehy Park
- City-owned parking lots and garages

In addition, DPW has recently increased efforts to clear snow from high volume bus stops, crosswalks, and ramps when significant snow accumulations. The Department is now clearing ramps at corners and bus stops on prioritized routes after significant snow accumulation (generally 6 inches or more) within 3-4 days from the end of a storm (if back to back storms, from the end of last storm). DPW wishes to stress that, as always, primary responsibility for shoveling sidewalks, including curb ramps, continues to rest with the adjacent property owner. In determining priority routes, weight was given to the following factors:

- Bus routes (a general indicator of high pedestrian and vehicular activity)
- Proximity to facilities where pedestrian access is particularly important, including:
 - Public and private school property
 - Libraries
 - Youth Centers
 - Senior Centers and Elderly housing
 - Galleria and Twin City Mall
 - 100 ft. buffer of MBTA subway stops

DPW staff met with the Commission for Persons with Disabilities and members of the Pedestrian Committee to receive feedback on this prioritization process.

Using this prioritization process DPW plans to:

- Include all corner ramps along the high-volume bus stop streets:
 - Cambridge St- Lechmere Station to the Cambridge Common
 - Massachusetts Ave - Memorial Drive to the Arlington Line
 - Concord Ave - Cambridge Common to Fresh Pond Parkway
 - Mount Auburn St - Belmont line to Massachusetts Ave

- Add additional streets where DPW will clear bus stops and corner ramps, to include:
 - Western Avenue
 - River Street
 - Huron Avenue - Concord Avenue to Fresh Pond Parkway
 - Rindge Avenue
 - Broadway
 - Prospect Street- Cambridge Street to Massachusetts Avenue
 - Pearl Street
 - Brookline Street
 - Green Street- Brookline Street to Western Avenue
 - Granite Street
 - Aberdeen Avenue

DPW will remove snow on a limited basis after major events and/or significant accumulation, and collaborates with MBTA, DCR, universities, and large property owners to ensure they clear snow and ice from their properties.

DPW will clear snow and ice from sidewalks abutting private properties that qualify for the residential exemption program. More information on this program is provided under [Snow Exemption Program](#).

DPW enforces the Cambridge sidewalk snow and ice removal ordinance. This ordinance requires property owners to remove snow from sidewalks next to their property or business within 12 hours of daytime snowfall and before 1:00 pm when it has fallen overnight, and to remove or melt all ice within 6 hours of the time it forms.

7. HOW DOES THE CITY REMOVE SNOW/ICE THEN SALT & PLOW? How does the City remove snow and ice?

DPW uses both manual and mechanical means to clear and chemically treat areas. Hand crews are dispatched throughout the storm.

Once the snow stops, City crews continue alongside the clearing of bus stops along some of the major bus routes and residential properties that fall under the City's snow exemption program.

The City's goal is to chemically treat all major arteries within three (3) hours of when snow begins, to keep main arteries plowed during all stages of a storm, and to clear all streets and the sidewalks bordering City property once a storm has stopped.

For more details on where the City clears sidewalks and ramps, please go to [City Responsibilities](#).

How does the City salt and plow the streets?

During a storm, DPW will deploy as many as 100 pieces of snow plowing equipment to begin clearing snow. Initially these plows are simply clearing a section of each roadway to allow for safe passage. As the storm begins to wind down, these same vehicles will continue in their assigned routes, pushing snow as far back to the curb line or line of parked cars on all of the City streets.

From the start of the storm and usually well into the next day, DPW will push back snow many times on the same streets to clear snow to the maximum extent possible.

How can I make a street plow/salt request?

The City appreciates your patience during the first phase of a plowing operation, as we plow main arteries and main streets first, then plow and salt all other streets. If you feel a public street has been missed, or you are concerned about a safety situation, please call the DPW Operations Center at (617) 349-4800 or (617) 349-4846 to request that location be plowed.

9. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This Snow FAQ has been prepared in cooperation with the following entities:

Cambridge Department of Public Works (DPW)

147 Hampshire St.

Cambridge, MA 02139

Voice (617) 349-4800

TTY (617) 349-4805

Email: theworks@cambridgema.gov

www.cambridgema.gov/snow

Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities (CCPD)

51 Inman Street, 2nd floor

Cambridge, MA 02139

Voice (617) 349-4692

TTY (617) 492-0235

Email: ccpd@cambridgema.gov

www.cambridgema.gov/ccpd

Cambridge Traffic, Parking and Transportation Department (TP&T)

344 Broadway

Cambridge, MA 02139

Main (617) 349-4700

www.cambridgema.gov/Traffic

Cambridge Council on Aging (COA)

806 Mass Ave.

Cambridge, MA 02139

Voice: (617) 349-6220

TTY: (617) 349-6050

www.cambridgema.gov/DHSP/coa