

Do the right thing

Principles of professionalism: Why they matter



By PHILL SEXTON,
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As a parent, I periodically ask my kids to “do the right thing.” Sometimes their response is one of understanding: “OK, Dad.” Other times they ask, “What do you mean?”

As a profession, do we always do the right thing or understand what it means? What does it mean within the context of performing snow & ice management services, engaging with clients and interacting with the public? Doing the right thing includes these minimum standards of professionalism and practice.

First impressions

How do clients, passers-by and people looking out their windows perceive us? Are we always behaving at the highest level of professionalism? Are we polite? Do we act professionally? Is our level of knowledge and expertise exceeding minimum expectations? As professionals we always have opportunities to improve.

Safety

Ensuring all team members are properly clothed, fed, trained, equipped and rested is priority No. 1. Everyone on your team should be wearing the same uniform when performing their work. The minimum standard uniform includes eye protection (safety glasses),

hearing protection, protective footwear, cold and wet weather clothing and high-visibility gear (reflective jackets, vests and hats).

PARs

Pedestrian access routes (PARs) are places where people walk and congregate. The transition zone where a road or driveway meets a sidewalk curb line is where the greatest risk for people getting injured exists. This area is what I call “no man’s land.”

A majority of sites I observe each winter have a windrow of snow in the transition area. Doing the right thing for PARs includes establishing a policy to shovel snow 24 inches away from the transition area and to establish who is responsible for this area.

Curb to curb

A visually professional appearance includes seeing the curb lines. During the sales and estimating process and in the production planning phase, the time and resources it takes to provide this level of detail should be included. Doing the right thing sometimes means simply getting out of the truck and using a shovel for a minute or two to perform that last 10% of detail.

Special needs

Wheelchair access and other special needs areas that require extra attention to detail should be planned and prioritized as part of the site engineering process.

Parking

The area behind parked cars is particularly vulnerable to avoid windrowing or stacking snow behind them. When an excessive amount of snow makes its way behind or underneath a parked car, do the right thing and shovel out those areas. This will require always having a shovel or someone else available to shovel. The use of containment plows or hydraulic wing plows for scooping snow away from parked cars is useful.

Anti-icing

A best practice for managing slippery conditions is anti-icing to prevent the bond of snow and ice to paved surfaces. This is implemented best with the use of brine. Preventing the bond with brine when conditions allow is the economically and environmentally responsible thing to do because it enables the reduction of salt use by four to 10 times compared with the traditional method of applying solid rock salt.

Standards of practice are necessary for any industry to professionalize. Standards of behavior are necessary to act professionally. Use the principle of doing the right thing to guide your internal compass. **SB**

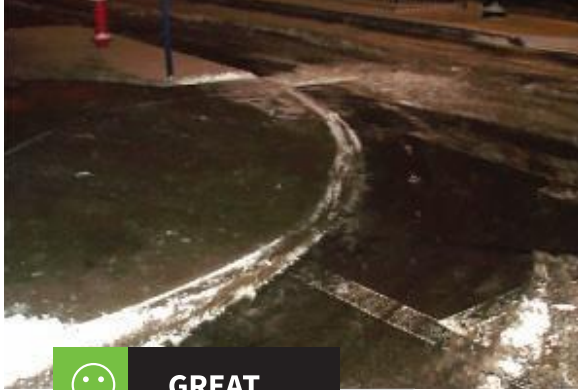
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SNOW & ICE BEST PRACTICES

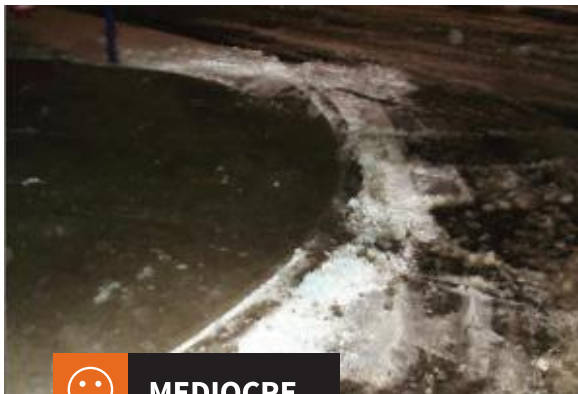
TRAIN YOUR TEAMS TO DO THE RIGHT THING: A small amount of extra effort to differentiate your snow & ice management services as highly professional compared with mediocre is worth it. Professionals pay attention to the details and behave responsibly and consistently during every storm.

SHOVELING WHEELCHAIR RAMPS



GREAT

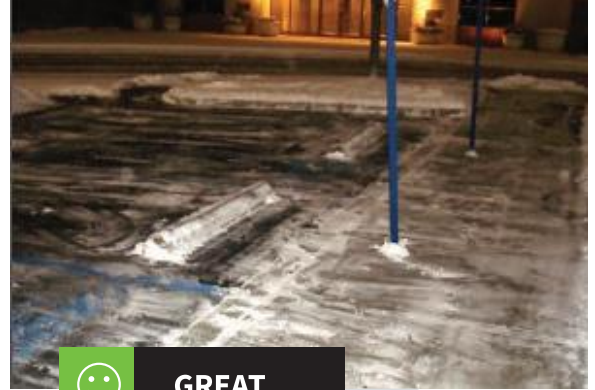
- All snow is removed from wheelchair ramp and crosswalk
- All snow is shoveled 48" beyond the ramp transition preventing snow from being replowed on the ramp



MEDIOCRE

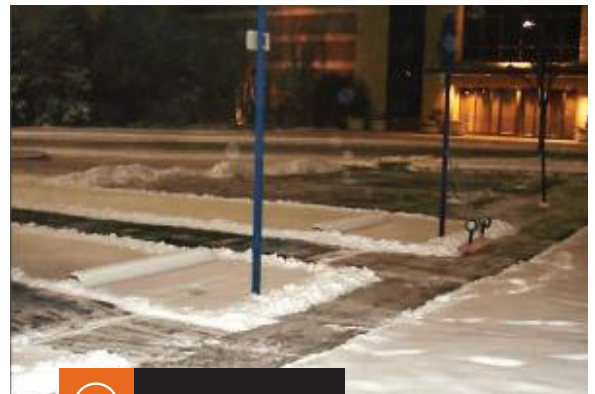
- Snow remains along curb lines and transition to ramp, which is a slip and fall risk and will require rework
- Snow remains in the crosswalk

SHOVELING HANDICAP PARKING & PARKING BLOCKS



GREAT

- All snow cleared from obstructions and parking blocks
- Snow is cleared from corners to allow for safer and efficient machine work
- Handicap parking is clear of snow



MEDIOCRE

- Partial shoveling of sidewalk
- Snow that remains along curb lines and parking blocks will lead to refreeze after plowing and rework
- Snow remains in spaces and has only been cleared from marker lines

SNOW & ICE BEST PRACTICES

SIDEWALK SHOVELING



GREAT

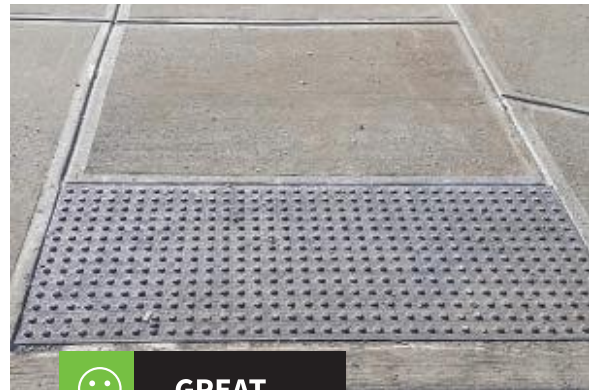
- All snow removed from obstructions (bollards/curb)
- Snow removed from around bollards to allow for safe machine operations
- Snow shoveled 24" from curb line



MEDIOCRE

- All snow removed from around bollards to allow for safe machine operations
- Snow remains along curb lines, which will lead to rework after plowing

SALT APPLICATION



GREAT

- Proper quantity of rock salt for control of black ice or preventing the bond of new snow accumulation (anti-icing)
- Salt was applied with drop spreader to control consistency of application rate and to keep salt on sidewalks and out of landscape beds



POOR

- Salt is over-applied more than 10 times the required amount
- Salt was applied by hand from a bucket (i.e., "feeding the chickens")