Snow Busters Volunteer Risk Assessment Form

Volunteer Briefing Sheet

The Snow busters programme is a snow clearance scheme using volunteers within the local community. The programme aims to build community resilience during bad weather and periods of heavy snow. Community and Voluntary groups, Tenancy and Residents Associations, Neighbourhood Watch groups and Council departments currently engaging with volunteers will identify candidates to become Snow Busters who are confident they can clear snow and are physically able to undertake the activity.

- Each volunteer will be provided with:
  - Snow Pack that contains a shovel, a spreader, 2.5kg or 5kg bag of salt and a high vis vest
  - Volunteer Briefing Sheet
  - Snow Clearing Guidance
  - Manual Handling Guidance

The volunteer will sign to confirm they have received and read this information and understand it.

- Volunteers will commit to clear pathways and pavements and public areas not cleared by Dudley MBC and will make every effort to complete this task when required. The programme is not for the clearance of public roads.

- When the snow comes it will be for the volunteer to decide if they feel able to undertake the activity safely and if so to attempt to clear the snow.

- Dudley MBC acknowledges that whilst the volunteer will make suitable efforts to undertake snow clearance there may be reasons why this cannot be completed. It is not practical for Dudley MBC to guarantee that areas will be kept free from ice or snow, including those parts that have received treatment. The public using the cleared area must continue to take the necessary precaution suitable for travel in wintery conditions.

- Dudley MBC as the highway authority has the statutory duty as part of The Highway Act 1980 to keep the network clear of snow and ice as far as is reasonable and practical, and will remain primarily liable, even if the volunteers are willing to assist Dudley MBC in discharging this duty. If a volunteer decides not to clear snow, neither the volunteer nor Dudley MBC will be under any liability for this decision.

- Under common law a volunteer can only be considered negligent if they deliberately went out to create a hazard. Actions which could give rise to liability for negligence would be (a) the careless discharge of snow from the shovel, (b) the careless placing of snow so as to conceal or create a hazard and (c) the use of water which actually increases the risk of slipping or skidding.
Further Information
The Law and Guidance
The Government publishes guidance about clearing snow outside your property, pathways to your property or public spaces please see: https://www.gov.uk/clear-snow-road-path-cycleway
The guidance says that there is no law stopping you from doing this. The advice confirms that despite some media reports to the contrary, it is extremely unlikely that someone who has attempted to clear snow in a careful manner will be sued or held legally responsible if someone slips or falls on ice or snow at their property. People should not be deterred from performing a socially responsible act, such as clearing a path of snow, by the fear that someone may subsequently get injured slipping on the path. Though the person clearing the snow does have responsibilities when doing the job, mainly to ensure that they are not making the area more dangerous, it is important to note that those walking on snow and ice have responsibilities themselves. A common sense approach is encouraged as is community involvement.

Health and Safety Executive Manual Handling
Information and advice on manual handling techniques can be found here: http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg143.pdf

Met Office
Provides up to date information on current and forecasted weather both locally and nationally and issues severe weather warnings: http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/public/weather/forecast/gcqd8xmxg

Dudley MBC Information on Gritting and Snow Clearance
Provides information on: grit bins; gritting routes; how Dudley MBC deals with winter weather and advice on motoring in winter: http://www.dudley.gov.uk/resident/parking-roads/street-care-and-maintenance/gritting-and-snow-clearance/

Dudley MBC Keep Warm Keep Well Winter Warmth Support Service Tel: 01384 817086
Provides home visits to advise on keeping warm and healthy during the winter and for anyone struggling to afford their fuel bills: http://www.dudley.gov.uk/resident/care-health/dudley-social-services/healthy-lifestyles/keeping-warm-in-winter/winter-warmth-support-scheme/

Dudley MBC Weather Watch
Keep up to date with all local weather related information and all council services affected during snowy and icy weather: http://www.dudley.gov.uk/media/latest-news/weather-watch/

Dudley MBC Live Gritting Information
Keep up to date with news and information on gritting in Dudley and our neighbouring authorities via the live feed: http://www.dudley.gov.uk/media/social-media/gritting-and-roads/
Snow Clearing Guidance

As a volunteer it is important to review snow clearance area and consider the situation you will be in when the snow comes and you will be clearing snow. This risk assessment form is an opportunity to set out your thoughts on what could be potential hazards/ risks to you or others and what solutions (control measures) you have identified to minimise these risks.

Activity
- The manual removal of snow from pathways and pavements and public areas not cleared by Dudley MBC. The programme is not for the clearance of public roads.
- The spreading of a thin layer of salt over the cleared pavement / area - a small handful of salt (about 20g) is enough to cover a square meter of cleared surface.

Significant hazards / risks
- Cold and wet weather
- Slipping on ice or compacted snow
- Physical clearing of snow
- Working in poor visibility conditions
- Vehicles losing control in the vicinity
- Working in close proximity to roads / fast moving vehicles
- The piled snow causing a blockage – blocking drainage channels preventing melt water running away
- Blocking resident’s access to their property
- Skin irritation caused by salt

Who could be harmed?
The volunteer - The most important thing is to look after yourself. If at any point you don’t feel confident and physically fit to complete the task then you should stop
- Members of the public
- Property (buildings, vehicles, gardens)

Guidance and Control Measures
- Prior to snowfall, walk the route and identify where there is open space, grass verges, and front gardens into which snow can be deposited.
- Ensure you wear suitable footwear (boots / wellingtons with a good grip).
- Suitable clothing must be worn that is warm and waterproof - 25% of your body heat is lost through your head and hands so wear gloves and a hat. When working, the body will build up a sweat so be prepared to shed layers as you work.
- A high vis reflective vest/jacket must be worn and ideally have a torch with you.
- Clearing snow is hard physical work so make sure as a volunteer you are up to it. If at any point you don’t feel confident and physically fit to complete the task then you should stop.
- Ensure you take plenty of breaks.
- Make sure you are close to a suitable refuge (building or vehicle) so you can take shelter in case the weather turns bad or you get too cold. You can also use the refuge to take plenty of rests as the work is very physical.
- Minimise the effort required by going out as early as possible so you can move the snow before it becomes compacted by people walking over it.
- Work towards the oncoming traffic so that you are facing the vehicles and can see if anything is out of control, giving you the opportunity to react to the situation.
- Be aware of pedestrians. Stop work if someone approaches.
- Do not work whilst listening to an MP3/iPod/other which will impair hearing.
- If you are working alone ensure you have informed someone of where you are and how long you intend to be.
• Have a charged mobile phone with you and remain in contact every 1-2hrs and inform friends / family of any changes to location or estimated return time.
• If you are touching the salt, wear gloves that will protect your hands.
• Make a path down the middle of the area to be cleared first, so you have a clear surface to walk on. Then shovel the snow from the centre of the path to the sides.
• Do not discharge snow from the shovel into the actual or potential path of vehicles or pedestrians.
• Take care where you put the snow to ensure it doesn't block people's paths or drains and so as to create or conceal a hazard.
• Spread some salt on the area you have cleared to prevent ice forming. A small handful of salt for each square metre you clear should be sufficient. Remember salt can be washed away and you may need to repeat salt spreading.
• Use the spreader to distribute the salt evenly.
• Ordinary domestic table salt or dishwasher salt can be used once supplies have run out.
• Pay extra attention when clearing steps and steep pathways - using more salt may help.
• Do not use water to clear snow or ice as this can refreeze and create black ice.
• On completion of the works ensure that all equipment is cleared and no trip hazards/obstructions are left behind.
• If your neighbour will have difficulty getting in and out of their home, offer to clear snow and ice around their property as well.
• Check that any elderly or disabled neighbours are alright in the cold weather. If you're worried about them, try contacting their relatives or friends, or if necessary the Council.

**Manual Handling Guidance - ways of reducing the risk of injury**

- Reduce the amount of twisting and stooping
- Avoid lifting from floor level or above shoulder height.
- Reduce carrying distances
- Avoid repetitive handling
- Vary the work, allowing one set of muscles to rest while another is used.
- Push rather than pull

**Locally identified risks and control measures that will be adopted:**

I declare that:
I know of no medical reason why I should not participate in this volunteering role and consider myself to be in good health.
Snow Packs will only be allocated to volunteers that are considered to be in good health and have no known medical reasons why they should not participate in this programme. All volunteers must read this Volunteer Briefing Sheet including guidance on snow clearing and manual handling prior to using the snow packs.

Signed ___________________________ Print Name ___________________________
Home Address ______________________________________________________________
Contact Number _______________________ Community Group _______________________
Date _______________________________ No. of Packs Issued ___________

| Dates Reviewed | | |
| Initials | | |