

The Importance Of Site Documentation



Source: www.TurfMagazine.com

So many times, I gather with snow contractors from around the country and the topics discussed are rather predictable. Low-bidders, finding good help and getting sued. Those, in my experience, are generally the top three. Everybody moans and groans about them, and ideas get kicked around, but no real resolutions come to the forefront.

I generally talk about what can occur to snow contractors if they get sued. Now, just so we're clear – most of the lawsuits brought about involve liability and whether or not the snow contractor did what was prudent in some particular circumstance that may have led to someone experiencing a lost-time or lost-wage accident (translation: slip-and-fall accident).



How can this be avoided? Of course, everyone knows that in today's litigious society, anyone can sue anyone for just about anything. As I have said often, it isn't a matter of if you'll get sued as a snow and ice management contractor, it's a matter of when. Once the suit occurs though, it then becomes a matter of protecting yourself as best you can under the circumstances. It does happen where the snow contractor makes mistakes that create or exacerbate an unsafe condition. In those instances, having insurance is a blessing. However, if you have done as you should and can prove it – the risk of a substantial payout can be mitigated even if not eliminated.

Recent statistics indicate that contractors who follow and abide by the ANSI/ASCA A-1000 System Requirements for Snow and Ice Management find their insurance carriers' pay-out substantially less than contractors who don't abide by any standards whatsoever. Even the SIMA Best Practices are a better bet than following no standards, or following your nose. Those contractors who say "I've been at this for 30-plus years and I know all there is to know about plowing snow and melting ice" are often fooling themselves into thinking that makes them an educated snow contractor.

Process, products, materials and equipment change over time as enterprising individuals and organizations come up with new ways to approach the business. Additionally, nowadays a decent contractor will document some, if not all, of their activities on any given site.

Keep Details Of Every Site, Every Day

I've heard the question asked: "If I don't document what I've done on a site, does that make me a bad contractor?" Not necessarily. However, if you think about it – to say "I remember exactly what I did on this particular site 4 years, 2 months and 6 days ago at 11:15 a.m. in the back corner of the lot" is suspect, at best. Memories are fallible, especially to a snow contractor who might be up for days fighting a storm, or a series of storms.

Documentation can attest to reality and give the wise contractor an edge on actually being able to accurately verify or testify to the events of any particular day and time.

Documenting does not make you a great snowplower, but it does mean you can attest with some authority as to what transpired on any given day on any given site.

Follow recognized standards. Read the trade magazines. Get educated. Document what you do. Be a professional who recognizes that "things change" and keep up with those changes. This is a very good step toward avoiding costly lawsuits – and to keep sites you are responsible for maintaining safe for vehicular and pedestrian traffic.

Read more: [Client Relations: Proof of Service](#)