

powered by feet first



feet first policy

taking a stance to advance walkability

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Sidewalk Snow Removal

Policy

where we stand

Advocacy is a major component of the work Feet First does. These policy papers, prepared by our Policy Committee, convey Feet First's position on key issues of interest to increase safe and easy ways for people to choose to go by foot.



background

Many areas of the state of Washington do not experience snowfall events frequently. Nevertheless, when these events occur, they can create treacherous conditions not only for motorists and bicyclists, but also for people walking. Cities around the state have responded to this issue by adopting ordinances that require homeowners, business owners, and tenants to remove snow and ice from sidewalks abutting their property. Some cities have policies that are more specific about how people are to fulfill this responsibility. For example, the City of Yakima requires a "reasonable effort" to remove snow and ice by 9am of each day after snow falls. East Wenatchee requires that snow and ice be removed within 24 hours of accumulating, and also suggests residents use "deicer, salt, sand, and gravel sparingly as needed," and to clean up those materials as soon as weather permits. Cheney specifically prohibits individuals or businesses from removing snow from private property by shoveling it onto sidewalks. Other municipalities around the country have similar laws.

Mission

who we are - what we do

Feet First promotes walkable communities and envisions people walking every day for their health, transportation, environment, community, and pleasure.



feet first
promoting walkable communities



Sidewalk Snow Removal

why it matters to walking

Despite the widespread adoptions of snow removal policies, snow and ice accumulation on sidewalks remains a serious problem and can make the simple act of walking to the store or bus stop a dangerous exercise. Moreover, during severe winter weather, many more people depend on walking as an essential transportation option because driving and taking transit become more difficult. Given these realities, removing snow and ice from sidewalks to maintain clear walking paths is a public safety imperative. While failing to clear away snow and ice can theoretically result in citations, the process is cumbersome and rarely enforced. Moreover, one of the key reasons behind the low level of compliance is simply a lack of awareness about the requirement and its importance. Improving awareness is likely to remain a key approach for increasing compliance with snow removal policies.

feet first position

Removing snow and ice from sidewalks following winter storm events is critical for both public safety and transportation needs. Municipal governments generally require residents to perform this removal for sidewalks adjoining their property. Feet First agrees with this approach because the most practical way to accomplish such a major task is to broadly share the responsibility for keeping sidewalks clear and safe. Feet First also believes that cities and counties should periodically re-evaluate

their policies to make sure they are sufficiently detailed and that they are enforceable. Beyond enforcement through citations and assessments, people should be encouraged to view removing snow and ice from sidewalks as a civic responsibility. Public service announcements are one possible way to inform the public about their responsibility to keep walkways clear.

resources

The Municipal Research and Services Center of Washington has assembled several city and county policies on sidewalk snow removal as possible models for other jurisdictions:

<http://www.mrsc.org/subjects/pubworks/snow.aspx>

City of Yakima snow removal policies & tips:

<http://www.yakimawa.gov/services/streets/snow-removal-policies-tips/>

City of East Wenatchee January 2013 newsletter with mention of snow removal policy:

<http://www.east-wenatchee.com/Home/ShowDocument?id=522>

City of Cheney snow removal policy:

http://www.cityofcheney.org/files/Public_Works/Street/Snow_Removal_Policy.pdf

