

Risk Review Online

Your direct link to better risk management practices

a publication of **Princeton Insurance**
PARTNERSHIP. PREVENTION. PROTECTION.

June 2011

Guide to conducting a post-winter building inspection

We all suffered through an extremely harsh winter here in New Jersey. Snow, ice, wind and rain can affect the physical condition of your office and property over time. Extreme weather conditions can lead to potential risk exposures, creating unsafe conditions for your patients and staff. Now that warmer weather has finally arrived, we recommend that you perform a survey of your office and property's condition. Then, put a plan in place to correct any unsafe conditions that may cause property damage or personal injury.

Here are some tips and things to look for when conducting your own inspection.

- Start at the top of your building and work your way down.
- Check the roof for any loose or missing shingles as well as any visible openings in flat roof material.
- Is the chimney intact; is the chimney cover in place to prevent squirrels and birds from entering?
- Inspect all gutters for blockages and make sure they are still securely attached to your building.
- Inspect the siding and down spouts for loose or missing pieces.
- Are there any cracks in foundation walls? This can affect the integrity of your outside walls, allowing water to enter the building.
- Are wires or cables attached to the building properly secured?
- Exterior doors and door thresholds can also be damaged by the freeze/thaw cycles of winter, so be sure to inspect them as well.

Walk the outside of your office and property:

- Start at the perimeter and move in towards your building, focusing on uneven walking surface conditions. Uneven sidewalks, potholes and eroded soil can, and do, present trip and fall hazards for people entering or exiting your office.
- Also check for areas where a snow plow may have lifted soil, damaged exterior lights or damaged your driveway or parking surface.
- Inspect the trees on your property, as they may have been affected by the winter weather. Look for dead/broken branches, raised roots, cracks or injuries to the tree's bark, holes or cavities. Any of these conditions could be problematic and may warrant contacting a certified arborist for assistance.
- If you have wooden decking and/or railings attached to your office, be sure no nails or screws protrude from the wood's surface, as they can cause serious cuts or lead to trip-and-fall hazards. Consider repair or replacement of the decking boards or railings.
- Remember, also, to check your office at night to be sure that the exterior lights are working properly, and that timers are set to the correct time sequence. Walkways and parking lots should be properly lit.

Early intervention and prevention will keep your property safe and free of winter-related hazards. When your property is well maintained, it presents a safe and welcoming environment for your patients.