

January 29, 2007

Mayor Bell & Members of the Common Council
7525 W. Greenfield Ave.
West Allis, WI 53214

Re: Clearing snow from sidewalks and crosswalks

Honorable Mayor and Council Members:

The Department of Public Works has been getting a number of calls regarding snow on sidewalks and in crosswalks. Most callers want to know whose responsibility it is to remove the snow from the sidewalks and crosswalks. Section 11.12 of the Revised Municipal Code makes it very clear that the "owner, occupant or person in charge of any premises abutting or fronting upon a sidewalk" is responsible for the removal of snow from the sidewalk. Specifically, they are expected to clear snow and ice to a path of at least three (3) feet in width by 6:00 p.m. of the day following the storm.

While not explicitly identifying that portion of the sidewalk that leads to the street crosswalk area, the curb ramp, this is also considered a portion of the sidewalk and is also the responsibility of the abutting property to clear. Traditionally, the Department of Public Works has assisted in the clearing of snow from these areas, especially along main thoroughfares where there is considerably more commercial property. While technically not responsible for this work, we have done this to facilitate the higher amounts of pedestrian traffic along these streets.

With the on going tightening of budgets translating to reduced available personnel and equipment, the Department's ability to provide crosswalk curb approach cleaning within a day or two of a plowing event is difficult at best. The clearing of school crosswalks and bus stops takes priority and only after this work has been completed are we able to initiate the clearing of curb ramps at crosswalks which, as noted, is generally limited to the major thoroughfares.

I felt it necessary to inform you of the Department's approach to clean-up operations following a plowing operation so that you would be better able to inform your constituents should they question you. If you have any questions or if you would like to suggest changing this approach, please feel free to contact me at your convenience.

Yours truly,

Michael F. Pertmer
Director of Public Works