



# ARCHDIOCESE OF INDIANAPOLIS

## Safety and Loss Control News

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Prepared by Gallagher Bassett Services, Inc.

## Building Maintenance Checklist

Inspecting buildings and grounds on a regular basis is important to making sure they are ready for the challenges of each changing season. Prior to the onset of winter weather, it is a good idea to be sure that the buildings and grounds within your parish are ready for the arrival of extreme temperatures, snow and ice. Checking boilers and heating systems, pipes and plumbing, drains, roofs, exterior lighting and sidewalks, steps and parking lots is critical to the safety of staff, parishioners and visitors.

### ✓ Boiler and Heating Systems

Enlist a qualified boiler inspector to inspect your facility's boiler and heating system. Corrosion, pressure and faulty parts are frequent culprits of fires and explosions. Ask the inspector to show your maintenance staff what to look for between their visits. Knowing how to look for leaks, building pressure and reading gauges can prevent a tragic accident or costly repair from occurring.

In addition, make sure the boiler room is clear of unnecessary items and clean. Many times, this area becomes a convenient storage location. Remove flammable materials from the room and lock them in a safe cabinet elsewhere. Take out any clutter that may have accumulated over time. Do not stack boxes, mops, equipment or anything else on top of or leaning against the boiler.

### ✓ Pipes and Plumbing

Another area to inspect and protect is pipes and plumbing. If there are areas within your facility that allow the water pipes to be exposed to freezing temperatures, the pipes should be insulated. Not only will this help to prevent pipes from bursting, but will also save money on the facility's water and gas bill.

### ✓ Drains

Regular inspection and cleaning of exterior stairwell drains to basements should be

conducted to lower the risk of flooding. In addition, where possible, make sure that downspout extensions are long enough so that they drain water away from the building. In addition, internal floor drains should be periodically rodded and inspected with cameras as necessary.

### ✓ Roof Inspection

Inspect flat roofs of buildings as well as gutters, downspouts and flashing in the late fall and early spring of each year, or as needed, in order to lower the possibility of water damage. For roofs that are pitched, consider having an outside roofing contractor periodically complete this same task. Water damage from faulty roofs, blocked gutters or downspouts and flashing which has pulled away from the building is one of the largest areas of losses to Parishes and should be proactively addressed. In addition, roof drains on flat roofs should be routinely cleaned of leaves and other debris. Standing water on flat roofs leads to eventual roof leaks.

### ✓ Exterior Lighting

Inspect, repair and/or replace exterior lighting on a regular basis. Exterior lighting is the first and often most effective means of defense against theft, vandalism, and slip, trip and fall accidents.

### ✓ Slips, Trips, Falls Outside

All sidewalks, handrails, steps and parking lots should be inspected on a regular basis. All noted hazards should be addressed to help ensure slips/trips/falls can be prevented. It is especially important to review the snow and ice removal plan for the winter. Off-hour activity times should also be addressed. *Pot holes in the parking lots are especially important to identify and correct.*



***Prior to the onset of winter weather, it is a good idea to be sure that the buildings and grounds within your parish are ready for the arrival of extreme temperatures, snow and ice.***

### Inside this issue:

Ease the Pain of Raking Leaves 2

Effective Snow and Ice Removal During the Winter Months 3

Slip/Fall and Snow Removal Checklist

Smoke Alarm Safety Tips from the NFPA 4

# Ease the Pain of Raking Leaves

The leaves on the trees are starting to change color and the beautiful shades of fall are among us. However, these leaves are beginning to drop, which can only mean one thing—it's time for fall clean up.

Raking leaves can be a tedious process. In the early days of fall, as you continue mowing, you can bag many of the leaves or mulch them if you have a mulching mower. However, when the grass has stopped growing and mowing is no longer necessary, it is time to cope with the leaves by other means.

When deciding how to address the fall leaves, there are some options to consider. Leaf blowers have the appeal of high-powered efficiency; however, these devices only prove to be effective on dry leaves. This presents a problem due to the fact that most leaves are damp and lodged into tight spaces. Not only are leaf blowers ineffective, they tend to be very noisy and lack "green" appeal due to their use of gasoline. Therefore, the use of these tools should be reserved for areas where raking is not appropriate, for example on roofs.

The first step in easing the pain of raking is choosing a suitable rake. You want to choose a rake that will make your job easier, not impede the process. There are many ergonomically designed rakes on the market that include contoured handles, which allows the user to exert pressure on the rake instead of their neck, back or shoulders. These rakes also include comfortable grips, designed to reduce hand fatigue and blisters. Some rakes are also designed as "clog-free," which includes a wave-shaped tooth design to keep leaves from sticking to the tines.

It is vitally important to use proper raking techniques to prevent injuries, especially to the back. While raking, avoid standing in one place and repeatedly bending, straightening or twisting your trunk. A good strategy to employ is to rake the leaves straight back and move with the rake as you walk backwards. Remember to switch hands often to avoid overworking one arm or one side of your body. Be sure to take breaks periodically to rest and stretch your back.

You may want to consider creating a compost pile from your fall leaves, which can then be used as fertilizer or mulch for the following spring. Leaves can also be left under trees and shrubs where they will compost themselves. If you choose not to compost and prefer to simply bag your leaves, you may



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want to consider using a wheelbarrow to help transport your leaf bags to their pickup location.

Protecting yourself during fall cleanup is also a crucial step. Remember to plan ahead and wear clothing that protects you from the elements. Long sleeved shirts and long pants can protect you from scratches, sun exposure, and bug and snake bites. Insect repellent and sunscreen should be applied and reapplied throughout the day to any exposed skin areas. To protect your body against cold conditions, be sure to dress in layers. In order to help insulate your body, dress in moisture-proof thermal clothing.

Although fall is beautiful, it can also be a strenuous season in terms of yard work. Remember to utilize your mower for cleanup as long as grass growth permits. Choose the best tool for the job and employ proper raking tips and techniques. Be prepared! Take a moment to consider what you are wearing before you head out to attack your yard work. Remember to take breaks and spread out the workload. Raking doesn't have to be a painful process; have fun with family and neighbors and enjoy the season!

# Effective Snow and Ice Removal During the Winter Months

During the winter months it is very important that ice and snow be removed from all walkways on parish property. This includes sidewalks, steps, parking lots, driveways and the interior areas of buildings. The following are some guidelines to follow in preventing slip, trip and fall injuries.

## Exterior Areas

- Remove snow and ice from sidewalks, steps, driveways and parking lots by shoveling or using a snow thrower or plow. Make use of small quantities of rock salt or other ice-melting materials to make the job easier and keep the pavement clean and dry.
- Prior to heavy rains or snowfall, check drains and gutters to ensure proper water drainage.
- Be sure that lighting is adequate to clearly identify changes in the walking surface or any obstructions.

## Entrance Areas

- Be sure that ramps/stairs are clear of ice and snow. Check the condition of handrails and ensure that proper lighting is present.
- Make available non-slip mats and rugs for wet/snowy weather and provide regular clean-up/mopping during wet weather.
- Check that all lighting in the entrance area is working properly and adequate.
- Remove any ice/snow that may accumulate in the entrance area.

## Interior Areas

- Floors should have non-slip finishes.
- Check carpets to ensure that they are free of tears, frayed edges or bubbles.
- Ensure that door thresholds are even with the walking surface. If there is a change in level, be sure it is clearly identified.
- Mop hallways one-half at a time, at low traffic times with warning signs.
- Be sure stairway treads and nosings are in good condition.
- Adequate lighting must be present in hallways, stairwells and other areas.

Everyone can take an active role in preventing slips, trips and falls. The primary safety goal is to prevent staff, parishioners, students and visitors from being injured. The only way to achieve this goal is to identify and correct problems before an accident occurs. Fortunately, by being

more aware of potential slip, trip and fall situations, they can be better identified, reported and corrected before someone becomes injured.



## Slip/Fall and Snow Removal Checklist

Please complete the following self-inspection checklist, and then retain it for future review on a regular basis.

1.  Is the necessary equipment readily available for snow removal?
2.  Are the instructions and training provided to personnel who operate snow removal equipment?
3.  Is someone designated to be responsible for snow removal for all sidewalks, steps and parking areas?
4.  Are arrangements in place for snow removal on weekends and evenings?
5.  Are all traveled areas included in the snow removal procedures?
6.  Are records kept for all snow removal and salting activities?
7.  Are all guards in place on all snow-blowers?
8.  Are all snow-blowers and gasoline powered equipment stored away from open flames?
9.  Are there mops available and procedures in place to mop and dry floors where snow is tracked in?
10.  Are all exterior lights in working order?
11.  Are all interior lights in working order?
12.  Are all handrails firmly secured?
13.  Have all uneven sidewalks been patched?
14.  Are doormats and runners in good condition?
15.  Are there provisions at all school events for someone to clean up spills?
16.  Are any tripping hazards placed across paths of egress (extension cords, microphone cords, etc.)?

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If there are any subjects you would like to see addressed in this newsletter, or questions about a topic presented, please contact Ms. Amanda Weller, Gallagher Bassett Services, Inc., Two Pierce Place, Itasca, IL 60143, Telephone: 815-236-5170, Email: [Amanda\\_Weller@gbtpa.com](mailto:Amanda_Weller@gbtpa.com).

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## Smoke Alarm Safety Tips from the NFPA



*The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) states, "Smoke alarms save lives." The following safety tips pertaining to the safe use and operation of smoke alarms has been excerpted from the NFPA's website. For more information, contact the NFPA at [www.nfpa.org](http://www.nfpa.org).*

- Install smoke alarms in every bedroom, outside each separate sleeping area and on every level of the home, including the basement. Interconnect all smoke alarms throughout the home. When one sounds, they all sound.
- An ionization smoke alarm is generally more responsive to flaming fires, and a photoelectric smoke alarm is generally more responsive to smoldering fires. For the best protection, both types of alarms or a combination alarm should be installed.
- Test alarms at least monthly by pushing the test button.
- Smoke rises; install smoke alarms following manufacturer's instructions high on a wall or on a ceiling. Save the manufacturer's instructions for testing and maintenance.
- Replace batteries in all smoke alarms at least once a year. If an alarm "chirps," warning the battery is low, replace the battery right away.
- Replace all smoke alarms, including alarms that use 10-year batteries and hard-wired alarms, when they are 10 years old or sooner if they do not respond properly.
- Be sure the smoke alarm has the label of a recognized testing laboratory.
- Alarms that are hard-wired (and include battery backup) must be installed by a qualified electrician.
- If cooking fumes or steam sets off nuisance alarms, replace the alarm with an alarm that has a "hush" button. A "hush" button will reduce the alarm's sensitivity for a short period of time.
- An ionization alarm with a hush button or a photoelectric alarm should be used if the alarm is within 20 feet of a cooking appliance.
- Smoke alarms are available for people who are deaf or hard of hearing. These devices use strobe lights. Vibration devices can be added to these alarms.