

The Benefits of a Rainy Day – A Risk Management Opportunity

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Recently I was walking around a property with the maintenance staff to review the site for Smart About Salt Designation and had a revelation. It was raining that day and, as a result, it was very easy to see the areas on the property that would present the highest risk for slip and falls in the winter and consequently would become the high demand areas for salt – just look for the puddles. We also saw poorly designed buildings that directed roof drainage onto walkways rather than having rain gutters that take the water to a safe location.



These are areas that site owners and managers should be fixing during the off-winter periods so that they drain properly. This action not only reduces their slip-fall risk but also saves money and infrastructure/environmental damage by reducing the need for excessive salting.

If you are the contractor who has to maintain these areas in the winter, then you will want to flag them as high risk/high attention areas and notify the owner – preferably in writing.

I was talking with a gentleman this past week about this problem. He is responsible for maintaining a LEED Certified building and recognizes the benefits of becoming Smart About Certified to ensure that the company has appropriate salt management practices. When he and his staff see these puddles they get out their leaf blowers and blow the water away before the next cold spell hits and turns it into ice. By being proactive in this way he has reduced the risk and cut his salt costs.

Another high risk and high salt use practice is plowing snow to the high side of the pavement. This stockpiled snow will eventually melt and flow back onto the pavement where it can freeze creating sheets of ice. Again – these are high risk and high salt use areas. The simplest solution to this problem is to place the snow where melt water will not flow back onto the pavement. One contractor makes it his practice to have the curbs showing (where curbs exist of course), thus ensuring that the snow is outside the paved areas. It



is not always possible to relocate the snow. One shopping mall proposed small asphalt humps to intercept and redirect the water before it could create a hazard. The other option is to remove the snow to a proper snow disposal site. Although more costly, it does reduce the risk.

The problem is best addressed at the time the parking lots are designed. By using more perimeter catch basins and proper parking lot grading, the water is removed before it has a chance to create large skating rinks. Let's treat the causes and not just the symptoms and be Smart About Salt!



Winter Salt Management Program

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