



THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO HIRING A SNOW AND ICE MANAGEMENT CONTRACTOR

**10 ATTRIBUTES AND CORE VALUES
YOUR NEXT SNOW AND ICE
CONTRACTOR MUST HAVE**

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INTRODUCTION

A heavy-duty shovel and bucket of salt from the hardware store may be enough for your home driveway and front walk during the winter, but when it comes to your business, snow and ice management is truly serious business. As a property owner, you have an obligation to your employees and customers to keep your site clear of snow and ice, and safe for everyone who visits you.

Snow plowing and ice control should never feel like "crisis management" that crops up unexpectedly throughout an unpredictable winter! Whoever you hire as your business's snow and ice management contractor should have a plan in place at all times and be ready — long before that freak snowstorm hits — to keep your property safe and keep your business running as usual, regardless of the weather.



There are plenty of unique factors that will contribute to your choice of snow and ice management contractors, but we've got a few criteria to get you started. Here are 10 must-have attributes and core values for a top-notch snow and ice management contractor — and some questions that may help you determine whether the contractor you're considering is worth its salt (so to speak).



10 ATTRIBUTES AND CORE VALUES YOUR NEXT SNOW AND ICE CONTRACTOR MUST HAVE

1

Has a proven track record and strong reputation

Simply having a working plow, a stockpile of salt and a truck full of guys just isn't enough to earn clients these days. There's plenty of research you can do on your own before you even begin vetting snow and ice management contractors — it's the age of the Internet, after all. Especially if you're considering going with an established contractor, online review sites like Yelp and Angie's List will offer relatively trustworthy reviews of a company's service.

But every contractor should also have a variety of customer testimonials on hand to share with you if you ask. Bonus points if the testimonials are available on their website and easy to find.



Questions to ask

1. Has your team won any awards?
2. Do you have any client testimonials you can share with me?
3. Is there a client I can contact directly to talk about your service?

2

Creates custom snow management plans for each unique client



Questions to ask

1. Do you create customized site plans for each of your properties?
2. Are all catch basins, fire hydrants and handicap parking spots labeled on your site plans?
3. Do you prioritize sections of each property?

But beyond all those other factors, the bottom line remains that the contractor you choose should be the one that gets rid of the snow and ice on your property most efficiently and effectively.

Each client's property is unique, with a separate set of risk factors and potential hazards when snow and ice are factored in (more on that later). There are also a lot of logistical factors: which way the snow should be plowed, where to push the snow, which areas are highest-priority and more. You should absolutely expect them to create a customized plan just for you.

3

Mitigates risks for their clients

Snow and ice management isn't simply aesthetic; more than anything, it's about safety. And when you hire someone to manage your property throughout the winter and any inclement weather that comes your way, it's their job to understand all the risks and help nip those hazards in the bud before you — or anyone who visits your business — falls prey to them.

A good contractor will perform a full assessment of your property before severe weather hits and alert you of any potential safety hazards that could become a real issue when there's snow or ice on the ground. Then, of course, they'll remain vigilant once winter sets in to ensure that those areas, and the rest of your grounds, are safe and clear of snow and ice.



Questions to ask

1. Do you notice any potential hazards on our property at first glance?
2. How will you be proactive about reducing the potential hazards in those problem areas?
3. What do you recommend we do in addition to minimize these risks?

4 Trains their staff to be safe and professional at all times



Questions to ask

- 1.What kind of safety training do you offer staff members?
- 2.Do you require your staff to go through continuing education?
- 3.Is your staff trained on proper use of equipment and application of materials?

Any company is only as strong as its weakest employee. The best snow and ice management contractors recognize how important constant training in both safety and customer service is to the health of their businesses, and they'll invest heavily in their employees' continuing education.

Whether it's training seasonal employees on the newest equipment for the year, sharing articles about weather trends for the upcoming season or paying for workshops and sessions to help employees be more proficient with their on-the-job responsibilities, any company you're considering should be eager to tell you all about how they're training their employees to provide the best service possible for their clients.

Balances risk management and client budgets

5

Snow and ice management contractors have a dual role, which involves a balancing act: They have to provide efficient snow removal services but also respect their customers' budgets. There are two types of contracts: fixed price per season, and based on individual events. Both have financial risks, as pricing is based on a "typical" winter — and winters are never typical!

When customers pay a fixed amount for the season, and snowfall is double the average, the contractor takes a beating financially and loses money and the customer makes out like a bandit, so to speak. Customers typically think they got what they paid for — but they're really getting much more. When it doesn't snow as much, customers assume the contractor's getting rich on those fixed contracts (and those who pay per service save a lot).

A solid snow and ice management contractor isn't looking to get rich off you in a low- or high-snow winter. Your risk will be balanced with outstanding customer service regardless of snowfall. You should get competitive pricing and peace of mind regardless of the snow that falls. A good snow and ice management contractor will be sensitive to your company's physical risks, your comfort levels and your budget.



Questions to ask

- 1.What do you envision as a "typical" winter?
- 2.What service assurances do you make during heavy winters?
- 3.How many of your customers pay a fixed price every season versus those who pay per service?

6

Offers cost-effective options for property management



Questions to ask

- 1.What types of payment do you accept?
- 2.Do you offer payment plans?
- 3.Do you have referral incentives for clients?

The best contractors will work with you—within *your budget* — to put together a snow and ice management plan that will keep your property as clear and safe as possible.

Of course, they'll take their own budget into consideration, from the cost of their equipment and supplies for the year to the salaries and hourly rates of their employees, but your contract should be fully custom and tailored to you.

Don't be afraid to ask for an itemized proposal that explains the services included in the cost to you. Be sure to be up front about your needs for your property, too; the types of material used, along with how quickly you'll want or need the property cleared after a storm, will affect the pricing more than you may think.

7

Provides clearly defined, consistent estimates

A good snow and ice management contractor will have a system for providing prospective clients with estimates. They should begin with an in-person, on-site meeting to evaluate the property and establish areas of concern, then create a site map and evaluate the challenges and obstacles on the property.

Based on those challenges, plus the physical aspects of the property, they should evaluate the equipment and manpower needs, which will help the contractor come up with a number of contract prices to deliver to you as a well-thought-out, clearly defined and consistent estimate.



Questions to ask

- 1.What sorts of things do you look for during your on-site meeting?
- 2.What criteria do you base your estimates on?
- 3.How long is this estimate valid to consider competitors?

8

Keeps accurate, up-to-date records



Questions to ask

1. How do you bill for your services?
2. Do you subscribe to a third-party weather service?
3. Does your fleet use real-time tracking software or GPS?

Technology can really help snow and ice contractors keep meticulous, up-to-date records. Software-based programs can provide real-time GPS tracking during snowstorms and provide data on the crews, pieces of equipment and services provided to your property, as well as how long the crews spent on the property. That information, combined with the certified weather reports from during the storm, helps cover all the bases for the contractor and you, the client.

Those records not only aid them in fleet and resource management but also help protect everyone's rights and interests during disputes.

Knows how to deftly operate equipment and vehicles

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Snow and ice management is never an exact science, but a staff of snow and ice management contractor's employees can certainly hone it to a well-orchestrated team effort that makes it all look easy.

Employees will know how to care for and maintain all snow and ice removal equipment — and work on a well-established timeline to keep it in tip-top shape. They should know when to use which equipment and how to stay safe and remain efficient while doing so.

Management should conduct multiple training sessions every year for all employees, new and old, that cover basic maintenance on machines and all their attachments, proper plowing techniques, how to navigate site maps, where to pile snow and understanding how salt works, and how and when to use it.

Just as important as understanding the equipment and how to operate and service it is understanding how to be responsible employees during high season, from staying warm and dry to getting enough rest during especially busy storm days.



Questions to ask

1. How much annual training does your staff receive?
2. Do you require any certifications of your employees?
3. How do you encourage employees to take care of themselves during the busy season?

10

Can be contacted 24/7 — and responds promptly

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Questions to ask

1. How can I get in touch with you?
2. What's your typical response time?
3. Do you have an inclement weather hotline?

Crazy winter weather, unfortunately, doesn't operate on a 9-to-5 schedule. It only follows that the snow and ice management contractor you hire shouldn't either.

There should be a plethora of ways for you to get in touch with your snow and ice management contractor — during the heaviest snowfall and ice storms, as well as those clear, cold days before storms hit. You'll want to know what options you have for getting in touch beyond the traditional phone calls and e-mails.

If the radar shows inclement weather on the move toward your area, any snow and ice contractor worth their salt (so to speak) should already have hands on deck and prepared to handle the situation *before* that precipitation is headed for the ground.

LET US PROVIDE YOUR BUSINESS
WITH PEACE OF MIND

Neave Snow & Ice Management Can Provide Your Business With Peace of Mind

There's nothing more important than the safety and comfort of your employees and customers during a long, harsh winter — and for peace of mind like that, you need a snow and ice management contractor that possesses as many of these 10 attributes as possible.

With up-to-date equipment managed and operated by a meticulously trained staff, plus years of experience and a long list of satisfied clients all over the Hudson Valley, the Neave Snow & Ice Management team has the answers to all the questions we've suggested here, and more! Hit us with your toughest questions and biggest site challenges. We're up to the task.

Find out how Neave Group Outdoor Solutions' Snow and Ice Management Division can help you create an efficient, cost-effective plan to manage your business property's snow and ice this winter and beyond.



Get in touch with us to schedule an on-site meeting and get an estimate for your property's snow plowing and ice control.

Call 845-463-0592 or visit www.neavesnow.com for more information.