



10-4

A weekly Q&A
with local
law enforcement

Submit *your* question to news@owatonna.com or 444-2379

Q: Why don't the police crack down on people who don't shovel their sidewalks? It's not fair that some people shovel and others get by without it. Also, isn't it illegal for people to plow onto public property?

A: Each year shoveling and plowing snow is a necessary task during winter. Keeping the sidewalks and streets free from snow and ice keeps everyone safe. With the amount of snow in a typical winter, it would be impossible to walk around town if sidewalks were not shoveled. The potential problems of people not properly clearing snow and ice from sidewalks is addressed by Minnesota state law and City ordinances.

City ordinances 650:00 and 610:00 address shoveling of sidewalks and the potential drainage problems. Ordinance 650:00 states any snow, ice, dirt, and rubbish on a public sidewalk has to be removed within 24 hours. It is the responsibility of the property owner to clear the sidewalks, and keep the sidewalks safe for pedestrian traffic. This means residents must shovel sidewalks on their property within 24 hours of the snow fall. If sidewalks are not shoveled, the City Engineer may choose to have an unshoveled sidewalk shoveled. This would be done at the cost of the resident, and they would be billed for the cost of snow removal.

Minnesota law addresses plowing snow onto another's property. This is covered by the littering law. MSS 169.42 says no person shall throw, place, dump, and deposit any snow, ice, and rubbish onto adjacent privately owned land without the land owner's consent. Depositing snow and ice on public streets or alleys is prohibited by City ordinance 610:00. By adding more snow and ice to the street, there is more water entering the sewer system. This could lead to problems with drainage in the spring.

Residents and businesses in violation of these ordinances and law could be charged criminally. Similar to most ordinance offenses in town, the police department has a difficult time identifying violations of the snow removal requirements. If the public sees a residence or business in violation of the snow removal from sidewalk ordinance or plowing snow onto private property, they are encouraged to contact the police department. We need to work together to keep pedestrians safe while walking during winter months, and keep Owatonna looking its best.

STEPHANIE FOGEL

Patrol Officer No. 7119

Owatonna Police Department