

## Snow Removal Resources for Community Organizations

In the City of New York, homeowners are required by law to clear the sidewalk in front of their property in the event of a snowstorm. Keeping our sidewalks clear is important for public safety, and not doing so could result in a fine from the NYC Department of Sanitation. Some of our neighbors, such as the elderly and homeowners with disabilities, are unable to comply due to factors outside of their control. If your group or community-based organization is considering launching a volunteer snow removal program, we want to share some resources and best practices to help make your program successful.

1. **Find Your Target Residents:** In the event of a snowstorm, you want to work quickly to serve vulnerable populations in-need. Reach out to [elected officials](#) and [community boards](#) in your district, including houses of worship and senior centers to assess who might need support.
2. **Recruit Volunteers:** It's critical to develop a volunteer recruitment plan that is targeted in high-need communities using a range of recruitment tools including: email-blast, social media campaigns, and flyering - local fitness centers and colleges and universities could be a potential source to recruit volunteers. You can recruit volunteers on websites such as [NYC Service](#), [Idealist](#) and [New York Cares](#), and connect with community partners to help amplify your message.
3. **Collect Materials:** Snow removal tools and equipment such as snow shovels and rock salt are essential, so ask homeowners requesting services if they have tools and equipment available for volunteers to use. If they don't, then ask volunteers what tools they have available at the point of sign-up.
4. **Establish a waiver.** In some instances, it may make sense to have your volunteers sign a waiver form before serving. This will release your organization from any claims, liabilities made by homeowner. A sample volunteer waiver is included on page 20 of the [Great Volunteer Management System](#).
5. **Train Volunteers:** Snow removal on icy sidewalks can pose a safety hazard, so it is important to establish safety procedures.
  - *Dress appropriately.* Volunteers should dress in layers to shield themselves from the cold and wear shoes with traction.
  - *Create a buddy system.* Avoid having volunteers shovel alone. A volunteer buddy allows them to support each other, and accomplish twice the work and impact.
  - *Set a time limit.* Encourage your volunteers to take breaks often to avoid overexertion and injury.
  - *Warm-up.* Stretching prior to snow removal can help reduce the chances of injury. Leading a group warm-up is also a great way to motivate your volunteers. Go over the proper way to shovel snow.

- *Stay hydrated.* Your volunteers should avoid caffeine prior to shoveling, and drink water to stay hydrated.
6. **Track Community Impact:** As your program launches, it's important to track the number of households served in high-need neighborhoods as a reference point for future snowstorms and volunteer recruitment.

The City of New York thanks you for the valuable work you do to help those in need during a snow storm.