

# The Smart Guide to Purchasing **SNOW SERVICES**

What to Do & Know Before  
Cold Weather Arrives



E-Book Courtesy of

**BrightView**   
Snow Services

# CONTENTS

- 3 The Best Time to Buy Snow Services
- 4 How to Choose a Snow & Ice Management Partner
- 6 Understanding the Types of Snow Contracts
- 8 Ensuring Safe Operations
- 9 Snow Removal Chemicals 101

## INTRODUCTION:

# The Best Time to Buy Snow Services

Sun, sand, summertime and snow. One of these things is not like the other.

You probably didn't need any help picking snow out of the mix. Amidst those feel good warm-weather terms, it probably felt downright offensive. So why are we throwing this four-letter word around? Because it just so happens the best time to line up snow services is actually during the summer.

It may seem counterintuitive, but there's a good reason. You'd never want to rush a major purchase and snow & ice management is just that: a major purchase. Waiting until the last minute to shop for snow services can add a lot of stress and complications to the process, such as:

- Decreased availability of quality providers
- Rushed or inaccurate pricing proposals from potential providers
- Potential for increased pricing due to last minute supply and equipment orders with limited inventory
- Scheduling problems or the potential for unqualified providers servicing your property if the provider is rushing to add you to an already overscheduled route
- Early snowfall that leaves you and the provider scrambling
- Sites are not prepped for the first event with curb markers and inventory staging

That's why we created this guide. Even if you know summer is the right time to lock-in your snow services, that doesn't mean the knowledge makes it more palatable. What does make it feel less daunting, is if the process can be made easier. So, we did.

In this guide, we aim to give you all the information you need to take the stress out of buying snow & ice removal services. After all, summer is for sun, not snow. Let's get it handled, so you can get back to the fun.

---

*The best time  
to line up  
snow services  
is during the  
summer.*

---

# How to Choose a Snow & Ice Partner

Now that you know summertime is the best time to line up your snow & ice management partner, what else should you do to make the process painless? Here are our tips:

## Determine Your Needs

Yes, you need snow & ice removal. That much we know. But what about your existing snow & ice contract? Has it worked well recently?

Starting with your existing contract is a great way to quickly identify the areas that aren't serving you well. Your current or prospective partner can propose adjustments to address those areas. Further they can identify whether anything is missing from your scope that should be added this year, such as a new building.

1

## Explore Various Pricing Options

Snow & ice management isn't a one-size-fits-all service; as such, neither is the pricing. There are a number of models, which we'll explain in detail in the next chapter. You don't need to have a preference-- a good provider should help you evaluate your options in relation to your scope-- but it helps to have a basic understanding of each, so you don't have to make a snap decision.

2

## Consider Capabilities and Responsiveness

When the snow starts to fall, you want to have confidence your snow & ice removal partner will be able to perform as promised. In order to do so, they need to have the resources, both in equipment and manpower, for a portfolio or property of your size. Using equipment that's too small drives up costs and is inefficient. Using equipment that's too large could damage your hardscape.

It's also important to consider their resources in relation to the size of the storm. In the event of a large storm, how will the provider ensure adequate coverage for all of their clients? Do they have contingency plans in place to bring in additional resources? Further, what is their plan to keep you in the loop during a storm? How will they let you know of incoming weather concerns and their plan to service your site?

3

## Look for Good Safety & Risk Management Measures

All of these tips are important, but this is especially critical. Snow & ice removal can be a dangerous job, so you want to be sure the provider you choose is doing everything they can to protect property and people-- both yours and theirs.

Find out if the provider not only has adequate liability coverage, but that it also includes a rider for snow services. In addition, find out if the provider has a documented, formal safety program with ongoing training. And finally, be sure the provider adheres to all local and national regulations and licensing practices.

For more in-depth recommendations, check out the chapter on Safety, starting on page 8.

4

## Check Certifications and Expertise

Like many industries, the field of snow & ice management has organizations that provide certification and set the standards and best practices qualified providers follow. Those organizations are the [Accredited Snow Contractors Association \(ASCA\)](#) and the [Snow and Ice Management Association](#). Find out if your provider holds qualifications from either.

It would also be wise to ask a potential provider whether they employ dedicated snow-professionals on staff year-round. Some companies may only conduct snow work during the winter, when their regular line of business is out of season. Finally, don't be shy about requesting references for current and past clients.

5

There you have it: 5 questions to ask that will help you narrow down the field and ultimately feel confident in your decision. Next up, let's break down the various types of snow contracts and how to determine which might be right for you.

# Understanding the Types of Snow Contracts

For most of the things you purchase, there’s a set price and that’s what you pay because the quantity is known. With snow & ice removal services, there are more options simply because there’s no way to know for sure how much snow will fall in any given season. Plus, the amount and type of service needed varies widely by site. As such, there’s a range of options for how to structure your contract, giving you ample opportunity to select a solution that will fit both your budget and needs.

Here’s a breakdown of some of the most common options:

TYPE OF CONTRACT	WHAT IT IS	WHEN IT'S BENEFICIAL	WHAT TO KEEP IN MIND
<b>Time and Material</b>	You only pay for the services you receive	<p>You’d like to pay for services as they’re needed.</p> <p>Short duration storms may lead to decreased bills.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You could pay more than expected in the event of above-average snowfall.</li> <li>Inexperienced providers may take longer or use more material than necessary, costing you more.</li> <li>You may need to verify the time spent and materials used.</li> </ul>
<b>Per Inch</b>	Price is based on snow accumulation levels (e.g., 1-3 inches, 3-5 inches)	You’d like to pay for services as they’re needed but want more certainty on cost.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Many providers don’t offer this contract due to uncertainty around snow duration and timing.</li> <li>Budgeting can be difficult.</li> </ul>
<b>Per Push or Per Occurrence</b>	A clearly defined price for each operation performed (e.g., clearing sidewalks, salting, etc.)	<p>You’d like to plan upfront for how much an occurrence will cost.</p> <p>Typically used for smaller properties with defined priority areas.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Larger events could have more than one “occurrence,” resulting in a higher expense.</li> <li>Storm timing, duration, weight of snow and other factors affect how many “occurrences” will be incurred.</li> </ul>
<b>Fixed Fee or Lump Sum</b>	A fee based on average snowfall rates for your region	You want to know exactly what your snow & ice removal services will cost.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You’ll save money in the event of higher-than-average snowfall, though most providers cap the amount of service that could be provided.</li> <li>It’s common for these contracts to be multi-year arrangements, rather than one-time, to balance out heavier and lighter winters.</li> </ul>

Whatever model you choose, make sure your contract clearly outlines the cost, scope of service, terms of delivery, and expectations for communication before, during, and after a storm event, so everyone is on the same page.

Now that you know how to select a provider and understand the various contract models available, let's take a look at the crucial topic of safety.



## Ensuring Safe Operations

We touched briefly on safety in the first chapter, but it can't be understated: you simply can't skimp on safety. That's why it's a topic worthy of its own chapter.

By now, you've heard us mention how critical it is for the provider you select to have a solid safety & training program. But what does that really look like? Truth be told, it's far more involved than just a binder distributed to new hires. Here are the components to look for:

- ❑ Required driver safety certification for crewmembers, including driving record checks
- ❑ A dedicated safety champion that leads safety initiatives within each branch
- ❑ "How's my driving?" stickers on every vehicle
- ❑ Programs like a daily "stretch & flex," which help crewmembers stay limber and focus on safety every day
- ❑ Ongoing safety training, including daily and weekly reinforcement of safety principles, and tailgate safety talks to address seasonal concerns
- ❑ Safety orientation for all new hires
- ❑ Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) Program, including the issuance of function-specific PPE
- ❑ Certification required to use all power equipment



If it seems like a long list, that's because it is. However, these are not unreasonable expectations. Consider it a warning sign if a provider balks at this level of detail or seems evasive when asked for specifics on their safety program. This is an area in which a good snow & ice management partner would never compromise.

Let's dive into our final chapter: snow chemicals.

# Snow Removal Chemicals 101

Snow removal chemicals have come a long way from simple rock salt. Now, there are a host of options, including a few environmentally friendly ones that are easy on the environment and your property. A good provider will help educate the customer on what products will work best for their needs. Before you sign next season’s snow contract, here’s a quick primer:

WHAT IT IS	HOW IT'S USED	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES	EFFECTIVE UP TO
<p><b>Sodium Chloride</b> Aka Rock Salt</p>	<p>Most commonly used on roadways and parking areas</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low cost compared to other de-icers</li> <li>• Both a de-icer and an anti-icer when applied prior to precipitation</li> <li>• Most widely available</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Blended ice melts containing sodium chloride tend to leave a powdery residue on walkways that can be tracked into buildings</li> </ul>	<p>~15 - 20 degrees F</p>
<p><b>Calcium Chloride</b> (Peladow or equivalent)</p> <p><b>Magnesium Chloride</b> (Mag Pellet or equivalent)</p>	<p>Applied to walkways, the chemical combines with moisture from the air or precipitation to generate heat that begins the melting process</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More effective for melting ice and snow at lower temperatures</li> <li>• Friendlier to plant material</li> <li>• Less visual residue</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Neither dries completely, which means an oily residue can sometimes be tracked onto flooring if overapplied</li> <li>• More expensive than straight rock salt</li> </ul>	<p>-25 degrees F</p>

WHAT IT IS	HOW IT'S USED	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES	EFFECTIVE UP TO
<b>Liquid Brine</b>	For pre-treatment up to 3-days in advance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2/3 of the active ingredient</li> <li>• Minimizes plant burn</li> <li>• Facilitates safer passage at the onset of the storm, less plowing time and less subsequent ice melt</li> <li>• Prevents ice from bonding to the pavement, allowing for cleaner plowing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited effectiveness with extended freezing rain; Will not prevent accumulations of snow or ice in moderate to heavy events</li> </ul>	20 degrees F
<b>Entry De-Icing Liquid</b>	Removes thin layers of ice and snow while preventing new ones	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Non-chloride formula is <u>Green Seal Certified</u> and safer for people, pets, plants, water, hardscape and metals</li> <li>• Biodegradable</li> <li>• Neutral pH (7.3 - 7.8)</li> <li>• Eliminates tracking of chemical</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More expensive than rock salt</li> <li>• Usually only used on sidewalks and entryways due to cost</li> </ul>	-60 degrees F

As you can see, each has distinct advantages. A good snow & ice management partner will help you find the right solutions for your property that will work within your goals and your budget.

If sustainability is high on your list of priorities, or if you're purchasing snow & ice removal for a LEED-certified site, liquid brine and Entry De-Icing liquid both are easier on the environment and carry less risk of dispersal by pedestrian or vehicle traffic. But for the most successful application, timing is key. That's why it's important to work with a snow & ice management partner who will constantly monitor an incoming storm to be sure your application happens within the right window for maximum effectiveness.

## Guess What? You Are Now a Snow-It-All!

Congratulations on your diligence! You now have the knowledge needed to get the best snow & ice management contract for your property or portfolio with a reliable, qualified partner. Enjoy your newfound confidence and your summer! We hope this guide helps you achieve a stress-free, streamlined purchasing process.

And remember, if you have any questions, or would like to schedule a consultation and receive a free quote from one of our snow & ice removal experts, get in touch. We're here for you anytime.

### CONTACT US

**866.932.6983**

[Send Us a Message](#)

For more Snow & Ice Management or Landscape tips, check out [www.brightview.com/resources](http://www.brightview.com/resources)