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MISSOULA BREAKS OUT THE SNOW SHOVELS

City asks residents to make it easier for others

It's later than usual, but snow has finally covered Missoula. This makes it difficult for everyone who has to get around on sidewalks, especially the elderly and folks in wheelchairs. The City of Missoula asks all residents to keep their sidewalks clear.

Shoveling the sidewalks in front of your property is a basic courtesy for all who use them. And it's the law.

"Even a little bit of snow makes it much harder for some folks to get around," said Phil Smith, manager of the City's bicycle-pedestrian program. "We will enforce our ordinance, but primarily we want residents to be thoughtful about helping other people get around."

"And while you're being thoughtful," Smith adds, "don't shovel into the bike lanes. That's not legal either, and it seriously jeopardizes the safety of those who choose to bicycle in the winter."

The Missoula laws require residents to clear sidewalks of snow and ice by 9 a.m. after each snowfall and to keep their sidewalks free of snow and ice. Remember that chemical deicers containing chloride may damage the concrete surfaces of their sidewalks. The ordinance includes businesses, which benefit from providing customers with safe places to walk.

Any person may call the City at 552-6345 to report that a sidewalk at a specific address has not been shoveled. When the City receives such a notice, an inspector will go out to look at the sidewalk. If the sidewalk is found to be not in compliance with the ordinance, the inspector will give the property owner 24 hours to clear the walk. If the walk is still not cleared after 24 hours, the inspector may have it cleared by a contractor, for which the property owner will be billed.

How can Missoulians help? It's simple, Smith says. "First, keep your own walk clear when it snows, and keep it clear all winter. Second, extend a helping hand. Offer to help those in your neighborhood who are unable to clean their own walks."

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