

Snow Removal: Check the Route and Equipment

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Why this matters

Snow can hide edges and obstacles while clearing work adds exertion, moving equipment and discharge hazards. Plan where people and snow will go before clearing starts.

Objective: Verify a safe ground-level clearing method and conditions for reopening the route.

Key hazards or failure points

Hidden obstacles or edges; poor traction; heavy exertion; cold; moving augers; thrown material; traffic conflict; blocked exits; drifting or refreezing.

Practical controls

- Choose a clearing method suited to the route, conditions and workload. Plan pedestrian separation, discharge and snow storage so exits, visibility and emergency access remain usable.
- Use trained operators and the actual equipment instructions. Keep guards in place. Never put hands into a snowblower chute or auger; follow its prescribed shutdown, disconnection and cleanout procedure.
- Arrange warm recovery, relief and manageable work demands. Use suitable dry clothing and footwear. Do not refuel a running or hot engine; follow the model instructions.

Verify It in the Field

Assess the route from safe access before clearing. Locate known edges and obstacles, check traffic interfaces and confirm where snow can be placed. Do not step onto an uncertain surface to test traction.

The operator checks the actual machine, guards and required controls using its safe procedure. Confirm the specified cleanout tool and isolation instructions are available before a jam occurs.

Confirm recovery and relief are usable. After clearing, inspect the walking route and exits before reopening them. Assign rechecks for drifting, refreezing and later plowing; record actual conditions and unresolved areas.

Stop and reassess

Pause for a jam, damaged guard or control, unsafe footing, blocked visibility, exhaustion or worsening cold. Secure equipment using its procedure and obtain help. Chest discomfort or suspected heart emergency needs emergency medical help. Roof work, downed wires and unstable snow loads require separate assessment.

Ask the crew

1. What is hidden along the route we will clear?
2. How will a jam be handled without hand contact?
3. Who checks the route before reopening and after refreezing?

Ground-level clearing only; not roof-snow removal or traffic-control design.

Sources: OSHA Winter Weather Hazards; actual machine and site instructions.

Free next step: [JHA/JSA planning & field-verification worksheet](#)

Expanded guidance and separate forms: toddjeromejenkins.com/toolbox-talks/snow-removal-ground-level-readiness