

# GROUNDS KEEPING

Visitors and employees to public facilities expect the premises to be well-maintained, clean and safe to access. Cracked sidewalks, blocked signs, falling tree limbs, uncollected garbage and other hazards can lead to injuries or property damage and negatively affect the public's perception of the facility.

Grounds keeping requires careful planning, forethought and continuous effort.



GROUNDS KEEPING



## OUTDOOR WALKING PATHS AND PARKING AREAS

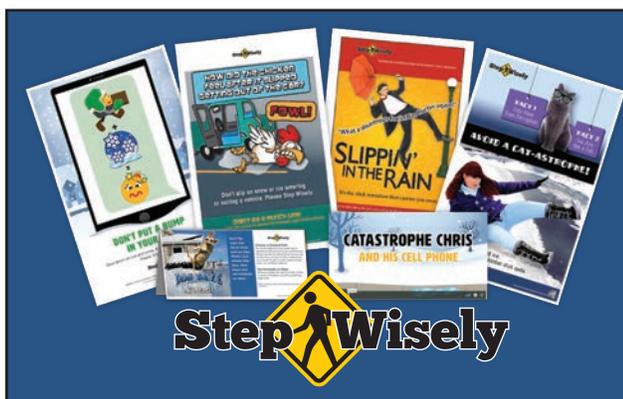
Walkways and parking areas can quickly become heaved, cracked, broken, washed out or overgrown. They also may have obstacles or other debris that can present tripping hazards or impede the flow of traffic, block emergency exits or emergency equipment, and may even have sharp or low hanging objects protruding into the walking area.

Periodic inspections of both indoor and outdoor walking surfaces and parking areas should be conducted on an ongoing basis to identify and address any issues. When conducting a periodic inspection look for:

- Sudden changes in elevation in walking paths or other walking surfaces. These are often related to cracks in the floor, drainage or erosion, vehicle use or animal burrows. Entryways and exits can also show sudden elevation changes when property settles or roots grow under foundations.
  - Missing or unsecure railings on stairways.
  - Branches, trash, rocks or other debris blocking paths or creating potential tripping hazards.
  - Rocks or sharp debris that could damage vehicle tires or the shoes or feet of people.
  - Spills or other wet areas in walking areas. Spills and wet areas can lead to slips and falls and should be addressed in a timely manner. Wet areas could be caused from leaks or from poor drainage. If leaks or drainage are causing wet areas on walking paths or muddy spots, the leaks should be addressed or drain pipes reviewed to direct runoff out of walking paths. During winter, misdirected runoff can turn to ice on walking surfaces.
- Muddy areas, potholes or low-lying spots in parking areas. These can also damage vehicles or negatively affect drainage. Consider redirecting traffic around such areas until they can be repaired or addressed.
  - Sharp objects such as nails, twisted metal or rough wooden edges protruding into walkways. These tend to be found around entryways or on railings, picnic tables or benches. A nail or sharp edge does not have to protrude far into a walkway to hurt someone.
  - Clearance around entrances and exits, particularly emergency exits. There should be clear walking paths to allow people to evacuate the building quickly in the event of an emergency. The outdoor exit discharge can be easily overlooked. Snow or other debris should be removed to allow the door to open fully.
  - Lighting and emergency lights in walkways or parking lots. There should be ample illumination to allow people to spot hazards and other objects, and during an emergency can assist with people exiting the building or grounds.



*Periodically conduct inspections of outdoor walking surfaces.*



### Build Awareness to Prevent Slips, Trips and Falls

MCIT's Step Wisely all-season slip, trip and fall prevention program offers several resources to help raise awareness about common workplace slip, trip and fall hazards. Step Wisely materials are available at [MCIT.org/step-wisely/](http://MCIT.org/step-wisely/), or members can contact their loss control consultants for further information. **More information about Step Wisely is available in Chapter 26.**

## TREE/FOLIAGE RISK REDUCTION PLAN

Dead trees or limbs can present serious hazards to property and people should they fall, as well as during removal. Musculoskeletal injuries are common during the felling process from the use of equipment, such as chain saws and wood chippers, and due to lifting and moving pieces. Less well-known hazards include blocked line of sight to signage or traffic, obstructed lights or conflicts with utilities. Deciduous trees also lose their leaves in the fall, which can clog drains or create slick walkways when wet.

Employers should have established measures to check the health of trees continually on the grounds and to remove or control them if they show signs of decay, or if limbs or trunks are overhanging the building or parking areas. Not only can this help prevent injuries and property damage, it may also limit the effect of tree diseases.

Obstructed signs, sight lines, lights or utilities may also require trimming of trees to address these hazards.



*The U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service Northeastern Area resource "Urban Tree Risk Management: A Community Guide to Program Design and Implementation" offers detailed descriptions of tree hazards, prevention methods and resources to develop a risk reduction plan.*

Facility managers are encouraged to work with public works departments and other organizations as necessary when developing an emergency action plan to fell trees and to address cleanup efforts due to storm damage.

## SITE CONTROL

As a general rule, pedestrians and vehicles do not mix well. Therefore, it is important to take precautions, where able, to prevent collisions or related risks. This can be accomplished in a variety of ways. The most common are a combination of signage, barriers and clear sight lines.

Signage or visual cues are the first step in site control. Signs can direct traffic and pedestrians, and separate types of traffic, such as larger vehicles to loading areas. Signage should also clearly label buildings and entrances to help reduce confusion and frustration among drivers or visitors. This signage can also help first responders in an emergency situation.

Visual cues such as painted crosswalks or other marks on the floor or road surface can help direct pedestrians and drivers into the correct areas. When using paint in this fashion, ensure that it is slip-resistant.

Barriers, such as vehicle bollards or other means,



*Crosswalks can help direct pedestrians and alert drivers to their presence.*

can separate vehicles from pedestrian walkways or important pieces of equipment.

Sight lines are another vital part of site control. Blind corners, high foliage, snowbanks or other obstacles can prevent drivers and pedestrians from seeing each other until it is too late. This can also block sight to important signage or visual cues. Be sure to keep sight lines open by moving snow out of the way, trimming trees and alerting traffic to blind corners or intersections.

## PREMISES MAINTENANCE

Seasonal grounds keeping involves regular cycles of lawn mowing, trimming or blowing, and snow and ice removal. These tasks should be performed in a safe manner.

Employees should be familiar with the manufacturer's handbook and trained on the equipment they use. This training should be documented and retained on file.

Training should also include proper use of required personal protective equipment (PPE). Proper ear protection should be worn when operating loud equipment. Wraparound eyewear or safety glasses with side guards should be worn when mowing, blowing or weed whipping to guard against flying or ricocheting debris. Proper foot or hand wear should also be worn as needed. A written PPE assessment should be conducted to ensure the proper equipment will safeguard employees.



*Employees should be familiar with the manufacturer's handbook and trained on the equipment they use.*

**More details regarding personal protective equipment can be found in Chapter 36. In addition, maintenance checklists on common grounds keeping equipment is provided in Appendices A, B and C.**

**Information regarding snow removal and winter preparedness can be found in Chapter 41.**



## GROUNDS KEEPING CHECK LIST

ITEM	YES	NO	ACTION ITEM
<b>Outdoor Walking Paths and Parking Areas</b>			
Are outdoor walking and parking surfaces regularly inspected and problems promptly addressed?			
Are sharp objects, such as nails and broken glass, removed from parking lots and walkways?			
Are walkways free of liquid spills and kept reasonably dry with good drainage?			
Are walkways free of protruding objects that could present cut, snag, trip or bump into hazards for passersby?			
Are outdoor exit discharges unobstructed and can doors open freely?			
Are outdoor parking lots and walkways well lit?			
<b>Tree and Foliage Risk Reduction</b>			
Is foliage on the grounds regularly inspected for health or decay?			
Are trees and branches kept from overhanging the building or parking lot?			
Are signs and sight lines unobstructed?			
Are walkways, drains and gutters clear of leaf debris?			
<b>Site Control</b>			
Are parking areas and buildings well-labeled with signs or other means?			
Are crosswalks or barriers present to direct foot traffic away from vehicle traffic?			
Are small railings or other devices present to help control the flow of people or vehicles in high traffic areas?			
Does the property have clear sight lines for drivers and pedestrians to see each other easily?			
<b>Premises Maintenance</b>			
Are employees trained about lawn and snow removal equipment use?			
Is personal protective equipment provided and worn when conducting hazardous tasks?			