

Owners must clear sidewalks of ice, snow

Failure to comply with city bylaw may result in \$100 fine

BY NATHAN LIEWICKI, EDMONTON JOURNAL

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Chico Blair chips ice off a sidewalk near 127th Street and 109th Avenue on Monday. He was hired by an elderly woman no longer able to do the work herself.

Photograph by: Bruce Edwards , The Journal

The city is not responsible for clearing or covering ice on sidewalks next to private properties, and owners who don't do the work could be fined \$100, spokeswoman Laura McNabb says.

"We're responsible for just city sidewalks and city-managed sidewalks, and those we are sanding," McNabb said.

A recent warm spell saw temperatures rise above the freezing mark during the day, which combined with freezing rain at night, produced slippery sidewalks in residential areas.

That includes the Westmount neighbourhood, where 86-year-old Doris Brown lives. She has a bad hip and is physically unable to clear or cover the four-inch-deep ice in front of her home.

"Up to two years ago I could still do it by myself, but now I can't because of my sciatica," Brown said.

She said the ice in front of her home isn't nearly as bad as in other parts of the city. She wishes the city did a better job of clearing away snow and ice on sidewalks and streets. She thinks Mayor Stephen Mandel is partly to blame.

"It used to be that as soon as it snowed during the day they'd be out there at night to pick it up and put it into trucks," Brown said. "That mayor should have been gone long ago."

The city bylaw states that all snow and ice needs to be cleared from private sidewalks within 48 hours of a snowfall or rainfall. To conform with the bylaw, Brown hired her summer lawn serviceman to chip away at the ice on the sidewalk in front of her home.

Chico Blair said it took him 90 minutes to remove ice from about 25 feet of sidewalk in front of Brown's home. He doesn't agree with how the city handles sidewalk clearing and fines associated with it.

"Nothing is being done on some city sidewalks, yet they're not getting fines," Blair said. "It's really not fair to give us sidewalk fines when we have to get them down to the concrete."

Homeowners can be fined \$100 for failing to comply with the bylaw.

Property owners will receive warnings before they are fined, said Ryan Pleckaitis, the city's enforcement co-ordinator of complaints and investigations. If owners fail to comply with the warning, they could end up paying more.

"In addition to the fine, we have private contractors who come out and clear the snow and ice," Pleckaitis said. "People will have to pay \$150 and up to have the snow and ice removed from their sidewalk."

Pleckaitis said he understands in some areas it's nearly impossible to clear ice. He said residents can access sand in boxes at nearby community centres. Bylaw officers will not ticket homeowners who appear to have tried to make their sidewalks safer, he said.

Blair thinks the city should give incentives to people for cleaning them.

"Whatever they are doing now, it's not working."

nliewicki@edmontonjournal.com