

The Municipal RISK MANAGER

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Salt/Sand Sheds - No Trespassing!

Public access to a salt/sand shed results in injury to a town resident.

This incident took place when residents entered a salt and sand shed to get some sand for home use. The 15 foot sand pile collapsed, partially burying one of them. A lawsuit followed and the following facts were developed. While there was a separate sand pile for residents, town policy stated residents could get sand "from the town sand shed". No warning signs were present on the salt/sand shed telling residents that access was restricted to authorized personnel or that unstable sand piles were present. The only barrier to entering the salt/sand shed was a chain which could be easily removed by anyone.

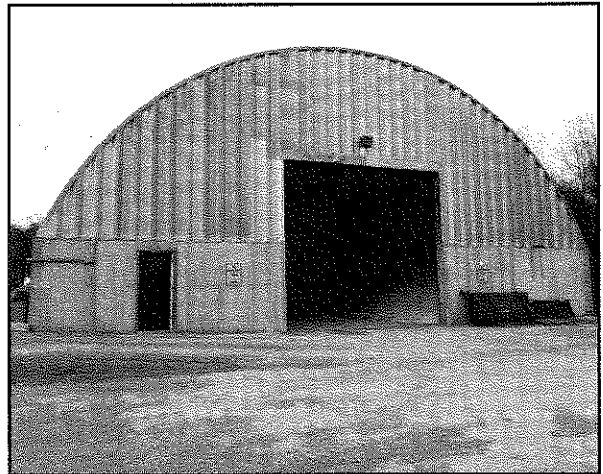
Let's face it, Maine winters are tough. Many municipalities help their residents by providing a limited amount of sand/salt mix for residents to apply to their driveways and walkways. A limit of two 5 gallon pails per resident is common. While this helps residents address slip hazards at home, how the resident's sand pile is located and distributed may create serious hazards to residents trying to get sand. The key take away is municipal salt/sand sheds are hazardous areas and should not be accessed by the general public.

The following lessons were learned:

- Access to municipal salt/sand sheds should be restricted to employees and contractors authorized to be there.
- Signs should be placed on salt/sand sheds clearly stating "no trespassing" and that access is restricted to "authorized personnel only".
- When not in active use, unauthor-

ized access to the salt/sand shed should be barred by appropriate doors or barriers.

- If a municipality wants to make salt/sand available for residents to use, this should be located in a separate pile, placed sufficiently far away from the municipal salt/sand shed so there is no risk of residents encountering dump trucks, bucket loaders or other heavy equipment. The residents sand pile should be prominently labeled as for resident's use.
- The municipality's policy on sand for resident's use should clearly state it must be obtained from the sand



pile designated for resident's use and under no circumstances should residents go inside the sand/salt shed.

These steps will help make winter safer for everyone. ■■