



# Risk Management Considerations for Snow Fences

**W**e can't keep the wind from blowing and the snow from falling, but we can utilize fences to help minimize the effects of snow dangerously sweeping across roadways.

The purpose of a snow fence is to keep as much snow off roadways as possible for safety and cost efficiency (plowing/salting). They keep drifts that would normally be blown onto the roadway around the base of the snow fence safely off the road.

Snow fences force the wind to go around and through the fence, causing the wind to lose energy and speed. The snow then builds a drift behind the fence which is good news for drivers.

## Risk Management Considerations

- Most drifting appears in the same location year after year because of the land formation. This makes it relatively simple to see where the best placement for snow fencing would be.
- In order for snow fences to be effective, they must be placed in the proper position. Fences should be set back from the edge of the roadway a distance of

35 times the height of the fence. For instance, if the snow fence is 2.5 meters tall, it should be placed 88 meters back from the edge of the roadway (2.5 M high x 35 = 88 meters back).

- An improperly placed snow fence can work against municipalities, resulting in snow dropping on the road.
- Municipalities should monitor snow fences in the same way road conditions are monitored on road patrols.
- Snow fences should not be used as a safety barrier in a construction area where there are open excavations. Portable steel fencing is required for this job.

## Additional Benefits of Snow Fences

- Reduces blowing and drifting snow on roadways.
- Stores snow at low cost.
- Reduces the accident rate during snowy, windy conditions.
- Creates safer travel conditions.
- Decreases freezing and thawing effects on the roadway.
- Lowers snow removal cost.
- Increases visibility.

## Different Kinds of Snow Fences

Some municipalities are enlisting the help of nature to create new kinds of snow fences. Natural and living fences do the same as their traditional counterpart, but offer many additional benefits.

### Living Snow Fence

A living snow fence typically consists of dense rows of trees or brush that provide a windbreak to the road.

- A 7 metre tree can store 80-100 tonnes of snow.
- A living snow fence will last from 50-70 years
- Traditional snow fences last approximately 10 years.

### Natural Snow Fence

- A natural snow fence is constructed from a minimum of 12 rows of corn left by the roadway. The farmer is compensated for leaving the natural structure up and they promote their good work for the community on municipally supplied signage. It's a win/win relationship as reimbursement and signage are less than the cost of installing a traditional snow fence.
- Natural snow fences are pleasing in appearance and provide a natural haven for wildlife.

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