

# Colorado Cross-Disability Coalition

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## **Two Weeks Later, People with Disabilities are Still Snowbound** **City's Snow Removal is Woefully Inadequate**

Two weeks after the Christmas blizzard ended, people with disabilities are still unable to leave their homes without assistance. Sidewalks that have not been cleared, snow that is piled into curb ramps, and thick ice in gutters prevents wheelchair users from leaving their homes, boarding buses, and crossing streets.

"I cannot leave my house unless someone helps me over the snow," said Julie Reiskin, the Colorado Cross-Disability Coalition's Executive Director. "The city plowed snow into the curb ramp I use to leave my house."

"When I get to my office, I am still forced to roll my wheelchair in the street on Broadway, Lincoln and 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue," Reiskin stated. "I don't want to get run over, but the City has not cleared snow off the bridge over Speer Blvd. The Coalition's office is located at 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Speer Blvd. in Denver. "The city is ticketing business owners, but has made no effort to clear some of their own sidewalks," Reiskin pointed out.

"Cities like Denver have an obligation under the ADA to maintain accessible features of sidewalks and curb ramps," remarked Carrie Ann Lucas, an attorney and Equal Justice Works fellow for CCDC. "They need to ensure curb ramps are cleared of snow, rather than using them to deposit snow from the street. They need to ensure sidewalks and crosswalks are cleared of snow so they are accessible to individuals with disabilities."

"I live three blocks from my office and usually roll to work in my wheelchair," said Jaime Lewis, CCDC's office manager. "I can't now because the sidewalks and curb ramps are filled with snow and ice." Lewis continued, "I contacted Denver's code enforcement division the day after Christmas, and still have received no response to my inquiry."

The problem is not only with sidewalks and curb ramps. Bus stops and rail stations are still impassable.

"I can't get onto the bus without help because the bus can't get close enough to the curb to put the ramp out because of the ice and snow in the gutter," said Rob Sirowitz, a volunteer for CCDC. "I can't believe we are still dealing with this 2 weeks after the snow ended."

"We have members who have been stuck on light rail tracks at designated crossings because RTD has not removed snow from these areas," said Reiskin. "I've been stuck on the tracks myself"

"Even though the big storm ended two weeks ago, and people think life is back to normal, that is far from reality for people with disabilities," said Reiskin. "

The Colorado Cross-Disability Coalition is Colorado's largest statewide cross-disability organization run by and for individuals with disabilities, with over 3000 members statewide.