

Let It Snow! Let It Snow! Let It Snow!

The weather outside is frightful, and a fire is so delightful. And I've bought some corn for popping. Let It Snow! Let It Snow! Let It Snow!

This song was written in 1945. Since then, things have changed, both with respect to making popcorn and dealing with snow.

In 1945 Percy Spencer was working on a radar set when he noticed a peanut chocolate bar in his pocket was melting. Thus was born the microwave, and the first thing which was purposely cooked in a microwave was popcorn. (The second was an egg, which blew up in a technician's face.)

If you microwave popcorn, is that the same thing as popping corn? Maybe "popping" should be changed to "microwaving."

In 1945 a property owner in Massachusetts was not responsible for someone being injured by an accumulation of snow or ice. If the accumulation was "natural", the person who slipped and fell on it had no claim against the owner. If the accumulation was not "natural", then the person who slipped and fell on the snow or ice could sue the property owner.

The distinction between a natural and an unnatural accumulation of snow was slippery. An expert had to be hired to testify.

In 2002 Emanuel Papadopoulos shopped at the Target store in Danvers. He slipped on a patch of ice that was covered with dirt and sand, and broke his hip.

He sued Target, and the trial court and the appeals court denied his claim, because the accumulation of snow and ice was "natural" so the property owner had no duty to remove it. In July the Supreme Judicial Court overturned the earlier law and held that the property owner had a duty of reasonable care to remove snow and ice whether the accumulation was natural or not.

What this means for property owners is that if there is snow or ice on your property, you are liable to someone who slips and falls if you do not remove it, regardless of how it got there. So, get your shovel or get someone else to bring their shovel, and get rid of the snow. After it is gone, you can microwave some popcorn.

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