

The Safety & Health Advisor

November 2020



WINTER SAFETY TIPS

The winter season is approaching. We want to remind organization's to begin preparations to deal with severe winter weather hazards. It is essential for everyone to focus daily efforts to help prevent slips, trips and falls, motor vehicle accidents, cold stress and other weather-related incidents.

Below are some actions that can be taken to reduce the risk for injuries associated with inclement weather. Please feel free to share this information with your staff. It may be necessary to formally assign certain responsibilities to specific individuals to ensure they are not overlooked. With everyone's help we can make this an injury free winter season.

Ice and Snow Removal

- Maintain an ample supply of ice melt chemicals. Keep containers in accessible locations near all entrance/exit doors. Keep a shovel by high usage doors.
- Facilities with large grounds, parking lots, and long sidewalks should consider contracting snow removal, if possible, and/or utilize snow throwers or special shovels to reduce strains.
- Assess where standing water collects in parking lots and walkways which can become ice. Areas near downspouts and other poor draining spots along sidewalks should be carefully evaluated. These slippery spots may need additional attention throughout the day.
- Inspect and safely remove (from the ground) icicles that pose a hazard. You may want to temporarily redirect pedestrian traffic as well.



Safe Tips for Shoveling Snow

- Shoveling can be excellent exercise, but it can also be hazardous for people who overdo it.
- If you are older than 40, or if you aren't in good shape, be careful.
- If you have a history of heart trouble, check with your doctor before grabbing that snow shovel and clearing the driveway or sidewalk. If your chest feels tight, stop immediately!
- Don't shovel snow just after you eat.
- *Pace yourself.* Snow shoveling is a strenuous exercise that raises both your pulse and blood pressure. Treat shoveling like an athletic event: warm up before you start, and stretch during and after shoveling.
- Shovel snow when it is fresh, which is easier to handle than partly melted or packed-down.
- Try pushing the snow forward instead of scooping and lifting it.
- Push or pick up small amounts at a time.
- Concentrate on using your legs instead of your back. Bend legs and keep your back straight.
- Take breaks. And don't work until you are exhausted.
- Wear layers of clothing and keep your head, hands and feet warm.

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OSHA has a winter weather safety and storm preparedness page at the following link
https://www.osha.gov/dts/weather/winter_weather/index.html

The **National Weather Service** (NWS) has excellent winter safety tips and resources at
<http://www.nws.noaa.gov/om/winter/index.shtml>

Here are some winter safety tips from the National Safety Council (NSC) and OSHA
<https://www.nsc.org/home-safety/tools-resources/seasonal-safety/winter>

Inside Facility Factors

- Implement a policy to regularly inspect entryways and halls to keep them free from excessive snow, ice and water. Consider that winter related materials (e.g., shovels, buckets) stored near doorways may pose tripping hazards.
- Use signs to warn of wet floor hazards and make sure they are removed after the floor is dry.
- Use walk off mats at entrances and evaluate carpets/mats at all entryways to make sure they are not ripped or curling at the edges. Inspect carpets/mats regularly to make sure they do not become buckled and create tripping hazards as well.

Motor Vehicle Safety

- Plan your route before you drive and allow extra travel time during inclement weather. **WEAR SEATBELT!**
- Listen to local radio stations and/or dial 511 on your cell phone (if available), which provides real-time traffic, construction and weather conditions. Limit trips outside the facility during poor weather conditions whenever possible.
- Prepare your vehicle
 - Carry supplies to help you keep windows clear at all times, including a scraper, brush, and extra windshield washer antifreeze.
 - Perform regular inspections of your vehicle: check tires, lights and windshield wipers.
 - Keep Emergency Supplies in your Car: cell phone (and charger), jumper cables, first aid kit, blanket, a small shovel and a working flashlight.
 - Winterize Your Car – use appropriate snow tires; check antifreeze windshield wiper fluid, wiper blades and battery before the cold sets in. Keep a supply of ice melt in the car that can be spread as needed.
 - Maintain at least a half tank of fuel at all times during the winter.
- Before you leave your home or office
 - Clean the entire car of snow and ice before you begin to drive **including all windows**, the roof and lights. (Jessica's Law New Hampshire)
 - Let your car warm up and fully defrost for a few minutes before driving.
 - Make sure all lights and heater/defroster are working properly.
- Driving Safety Tips
 - Start off slowly on ice or snow so the wheels won't spin or lose traction.
 - Drive smoothly and allow plenty of extra space between your vehicle and the one ahead (whether driving or stopped) when slippery or poor weather reduces visibility.
 - Do not talk on the cell phone while driving or engage in any other distracting activities.



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Parking Lot/Walkway Maintenance

- Consider emergency repairs, or marking areas in parking lots and walkways, where there may be pot holes or raised pavement due to frost heaving.
- Be sure painted markings and signs in parking lots are in good condition and visible particularly when snow banks get high.
- Mark speed bumps, curbs and road perimeter with appropriate markers (preferably reflective) to prevent damage during plowing.
- Consider implementing a “directed parking program” during storms to maximize the ability to clear the parking lots of ice and snow. For example employees during each shift are directed to park in designated areas so that the other areas are open to plowing.

Severe Weather Policy/Plan

- Organizations should consider developing and implementing a policy or practices to reduce the potential for staff injuries, especially those that have delivery or field operations (i.e. Visiting Nurses), such as change in delivery/service schedule to avoid the expected storm event timing; consider alternative transport methods (i.e. taxi service) as well as closing/delay process for all employees. The following article provides some thoughts for consideration.
<https://www.thebalance.com/inclement-weather-policy-sample-1918020>

Footwear

- Encourage employees to wear safe, slip-resistant footwear when working or walking outside. Provide employees and visitors with a place to change from outside footwear such as boots to inside footwear (i.e. bench or chair).
- Investigate a program to assist employees with the purchase of slip-on ice traction aids if your workforce is outside frequently. There are several types, including full foot and heel only, and average in the \$20/pair range. Most are easy to use and are amazingly efficient. Most need to be removed while driving, but some do not. Some vendors are:

Full Sole

Yaktrax Walker: <https://yaktrax.implus.com/> (4 sizes) - Use coil springs, not spikes. Also available at: Amazon, Walmart, Cabelas, REI and other retailers.

STABILicers™ Lite Icewalker: <https://stabil.implus.com/> (4 sizes) - steel cleats.

Ice Trekkers: <https://www.gearcor.com/itdg/ICEtrekkers-Diamond-Grip-Ice-Traction.htm>

Winter Walking Transitional Traction: <https://www.winterwalking.com/transitional-traction>

Various Styles: www.cozywinters.com/ice-cleats/ice-cleats.html

Various Styles: <https://www.slipresistant.net/purpose/driving.html> (claim are safe for driving)

Heel Only

Winter Walking Heel Grips: <http://winterwalking.com/product-details.php?model=JD250>

Ergodyne TREX™ 6315: <https://www.ergodyne.com/trex-6315-strap-on-heel-ice-traction-device.html>

STABILicers™ Heel: <https://stabil.implus.com/products/job-safety/stabil-heel>

You may find additional savings at discount retailers such as Ocean State Job Lot and Wal-Mart.

The following articles provide tips for slip/trip/fall prevention and safe winter walking:

<https://ohsonline.com/Articles/2020/10/01/Gearing-Up-for-Slip-Trip-and-Fall-Season.aspx?Page=1>

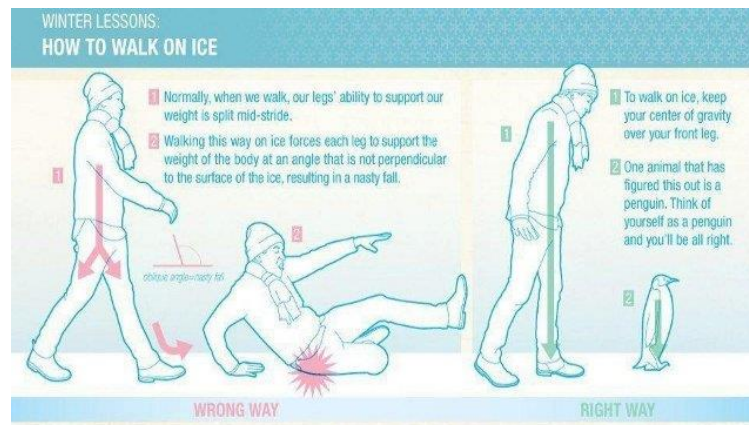
www.ohsonline.com/Articles/2014/11/01/Staying-On-Your-Feet-in-the-Winter.aspx?p=1



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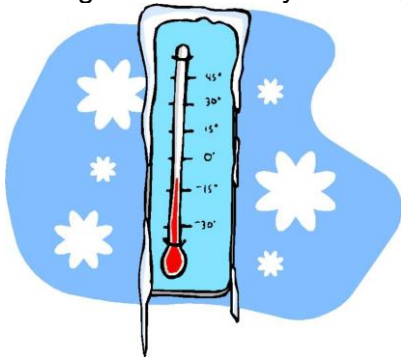
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Walk Like a Penguin to Avoid Slipping on Ice. If you shift your center-of-gravity over your front facing foot instead of splitting it evenly between your feet, you can more easily walk across icy surfaces without falling quite so much.



Working Outdoors

- Dress warmly and stay dry
- Employees should wear a hat, scarf or knit/cloth mask to cover face, nose and mouth, sleeves that are snug at the wrist, mittens (are warmer than gloves), water-resistant coat and boots and several layers of loose-fitting clothing. Do not ignore shivering, it's an important first sign that the body is losing heat. Persistent shivering is a signal to return indoors.



- Prolonged exposure to cold can cause hypothermia. Watch for these symptoms:
 - shivering, exhaustion
 - confusion, fumbling hands
 - memory loss, slurred speech
 - drowsiness
- If a person's body temperature drops below 95 degrees Fahrenheit, get emergency medical assistance immediately! Remove wet clothing, wrap the person in warm blankets and give warm, non-alcoholic, non-caffeinated liquids until help arrives.

People working outdoors during the winter can develop frostbite and not even know it. There is no pain associated with early stages of frostbite, so learn to watch for these danger signs:

- The skin may feel numb and can become flushed. It then turns white or grayish-yellow.
- Frostbitten skin feels cold to the touch.
- If frostbite is suspected, move the person to a warm area. Cover the affected area with something warm and dry and seek medical attention.