

Winter Safety Tips: Avoiding Slips, Trips and Falls

Slips and falls are a major cause of injury at home and in business. According to the National Safety Council, 25,000 slip and fall accidents occur daily in the United States; more than 16,000 people die each year as a result of falls; and one in five emergency room visits is the result of a fall. The National Safety Council estimated that slips, trips and falls account for about 15 percent to 20 percent of all workers' compensation costs. According to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, slips, trips and fall accidents are second only to motor vehicles as a cause of occupational fatalities. The risk of injury is especially a concern to businesses with considerable foot traffic. Employees and other third parties on your premises – visitors, customers, vendors, contractors and subcontractors – could be at risk of a slip, trip and fall accident and injury particularly where unsafe conditions exist. Unsafe conditions are accidents waiting to happen. Injuries caused by slips, trips and falls are a major burden to employers, especially during the winter months. Wintertime snow and ice bring an increased risk of slips and falls due to slippery sidewalks, parking lots and work areas.

Here are a few tips you may wish to share with your employees.

Parking Lots and Sidewalks

Make sure walking paths are properly illuminated. Mark trouble spots such as snow banks and slippery curbs with caution tape or orange cones. Remember to adequately salt walkways. Be sure to remove re-melted snow and ice after the application of salt/snow melt.

Entrances and Exits

Ask all of your employees to enter and exit from one or two doors. That will make it easier to ensure snow is removed, ice doesn't build up and conditions are less hazardous. Mop all entrances and exits regularly to prevent water accumulation. Place wet floor signage at entry and exit points to alert both employees and the public and reduce the potential for slips and falls.



Communicating with Employees

Talk to employees about things they can do to avoid slips and falls this winter.

Tips include:

Avoid wearing high heels outside. Flat shoes with slip resistant soles or boots are best. When walking across ice or snow, be sure to take short, flat steps. Walk. Don't run. Slowing down will decrease the chances of a slip and fall. When entering a building, remember to clean your footwear thoroughly on the floor mats or carpet. Mats should also be non-skid and slip resistant. Use walkways that have been salted or shoveled. Discourage taking shortcuts over snow piles and in areas where snow and ice removal is not feasible. Spread salt or sand when you see icy spots. You can help reduce the number of falls by taking action. Be aware of black ice—a thin, nearly invisible coating of ice caused when temperatures rise above freezing and quickly drop below freezing.