

Winter Weather Slips and Falls Prevention Guide

Slips, trips, and falls are preventable!

You can prevent a fall by doing your part, watching where you are going and thinking about where your feet are going.

As an employer you are responsible for the safety of employees once they report to work. You should also be concerned about getting employees in and out of your building safely, especially during inclement weather. No industry or business is exempt from injuries that result from inclement weather. Rain, sleet, snow and ice are hazards to every business.

This Prevention Guide will provide information to assist you in preventing weather related slips and falls and provide actions you can take to reduce the potential for injuries.

Tips for Managing Slips and Falls

- ▶ Establish who is responsible for snow and ice removal, i.e., facility managers, custodians, grounds maintenance staff and contracted snow removal personnel. Make sure that all responsible parties are aware of the specific locations they are to remove snow.
- ▶ Train those responsible in procedures for safely maintaining walkway surfaces, including the location of equipment and supplies.
- ▶ Plow, shovel and use de-icing, salting or ice melting chemicals to remove ice and snow.
- ▶ Apply de-icing chemicals before a storm, followed by snow/ice removal during and after the storm. Use plenty of de-icing materials, as using "barely enough" will leave patches of ice.
- ▶ The initial step in de-icing is choosing a de-icing agent. When selecting ice melting chemicals, here are some things to consider:
 - Rock salt (sodium chloride) is the least expensive but is somewhat corrosive and can damage concrete, interior surfaces and vegetation. It may need a wetting agent when used at low temperatures.
 - Calcium chloride and magnesium chloride are more effective than rock salt and most effective at lower temperatures. Magnesium chloride is somewhat less corrosive than calcium chloride, which is about as corrosive as rock salt.
 - Calcium magnesium acetate is the most environmentally friendly but is more expensive and is least effective at lower temperatures.
- ▶ Check the surface regularly. For parking areas, this can be time-consuming, but it is well-worth the effort.
- ▶ Effective ice removal often occurs during the day with full sun. But full sun will melt adjacent snow or ice, placing water runoff on the de-iced walking surface. This will dilute the solution and tend to refreeze at night. With dropping temperatures, ice can re-form with falls occurring first thing in the morning.
- ▶ Aim for evaporation. If the water can drain (e.g., drains aren't blocked) and there is full sun or even reasonable wind, the water (even ice) will evaporate. A dry pavement is a clear indication there is no ice.
- ▶ Use a friction additive. Sand is the most popular because it is cheap. Use a lot of it. Make certain that anyone walking on the surface has a lot of traction. Be sure to clean up the residue once inclement weather is over as loose materials may lead to a slip hazard in the future.
- ▶ Check and treat surfaces every morning, especially around snow piles where melting may have created new problem areas. Reevaluate during the day and treat as needed.

- ▶ Remember that a clean-looking surface is only "safe" if it is dry. A wet surface can contain ice and also can turn to ice in the shade or overnight.
- ▶ Have designated walkways cleared and established before employees report to work and prior to them leaving for the day. Ensure designated parking areas are cleared as well prior to employee arrival and departure times.
- ▶ Have all employees utilize designated walkways and enforce this practice.
- ▶ Have snow removal equipment and supplies readily available. Keep shovels and ice melt near all walkway entrances.
- ▶ Take advantage of technology and telephone or text employees to alert them to use caution when entering buildings.

Walk off Mats

- ▶ One important precaution is the placement of walk-off mats at all entrance doors.
- ▶ Mats should allow for a minimum of 10 paces in the normal direction of travel in order to absorb water and snow that may accumulate at entrances during inclement weather.
- ▶ Mats should be constructed of rubber or cocoa fiber, which help remove water and dirt from shoes. The color of the mats should contrast with the color of the flooring, and mat edges should taper down to the floor for a smooth transition to the floor's surface.
- ▶ Under severe conditions, consider posting a janitorial staff member at each entrance to warn employees and customers entering the area about the slipping hazard and to manually mop any excess water that may accumulate.

Field Operations

- ▶ For those employees who do not report regularly to an office, such as home health aides, sales representatives, and service technicians; it is recommended that they carry kitty litter or small kits in their vehicles to treat ice or snow covered walkways as they may come upon them.
- ▶ It is recommend that employees wear slip resistant shoes wherever they may be exposed to wet surfaces and consider slip-over grips to make walking in the snow safer

Although Eastern Alliance Insurance Group does not recommend or suggest one product/vendor over another; we have listed *some* resources below that you may find beneficial:

Consider purchasing temperature sensitive signage in which the color changes when the temperature is below freezing for outdoor use at employee parking lot entrances:



Ice Alert.
<http://www.icealert.com/slipandfall.cfm?action=price>

Have employees wear a type of traction aids such as the slip over sole grips, etc. when they are outside shoveling or de-icing the pavement/concrete.



www.winterwalking.com

To access additional resources, visit the Risk Management Resource Center on www.eains.com, or contact your Regional office to speak with your Risk Management Consultant.