



# Toolbox Talks

## Fall Season Safety Part 1

### FALL SEASON SAFETY AT WORK

by Kellie Whitman

The fall season is upon us once again & in the Northeastern portion of the U.S, that means construction companies are on a full court press to complete their work before the winter season hits. The following tips are important to keep in mind as the season changes from Summer to Fall:

• **Three Points of Contact:** All equipment operators should maintain three points of contact when accessing or exiting their equipment. The fall weather brings muddy conditions, the morning & evening dew can present a hazard also. Three points of contact at all times will assist with preventing operators from slipping & falling off their equipment. These types of falls from equipment often times can cause back strains, broken ribs, & several other lost work day injuries. Clearing mud off all areas of the heavy equipment, including landings, ladders, & tracks; every place an operator is required to stand & climb. Cleaning these areas should be a task performed every day.

• **The morning & afternoon sun is intense during the fall season.** Heavy equipment operators need to don sunglasses at all times, & they should also clean the glass/windows on their equipment daily. It is very important that heavy equipment operators STOP their equipment if their vision is impaired at any moment. If an operator can not see 100% from their equipment then they need a spotter to assist them; bodies on the ground are no match for a large piece of equipment therefore 100% visibility is a must when heavy equipment is being moved.

• **Construction work zones are inherently dangerous.** During the fall season, wet, slippery conditions put the traveling public as well as the men & women working in the work zone at additional risk.

• **Ground personnel on a construction site should maintain a safe distance from any piece of heavy equipment.** Heavy equipment can make sudden & unexpected movements due to slippery & wet conditions.

• **The fall season brings on employee burn-out & fatigue.** Construction personnel have completed a summer season push which consisted of tight & aggressive work schedules, including long work hours & working 5-7 days per week for months. Now these people are expected to pick it up a notch to follow through & finish projects before the winter season. With fatigue & burn-out comes complacency. During the fall season push, there is no room for complacency but instead there must be a renewed commitment to working safe.

• **Hypothermia:** Construction personnel should always have an extra change of clothes with them in case they get wet during the course of their work day. People can succumb to hypothermia when the air temperature reaches 50-65° Fahrenheit. When you add wet and muddy clothing to that, hypothermia is a real potential for personnel working outdoors during the fall season. Hypothermia sets in when body temperature drops to 95° Fahrenheit. Obvious symptoms of hypothermia include cold & pale skin, slurred speech, & intense shivering. The nervous system is the first impaired; watch for the signs & symptoms.

### FALL SEASON SAFETY EVERYWHERE ELSE

By Terry Hurley & Lisa Floyd

Fall is a time to admire the colorful leaves, enjoy the cool air, & visit with family over big food spreads. However, fall also is the season to watch out for common dangers. Keeping in mind some frequent hazards will keep you safe during this time of year:

#### Fire Safety

When the weather turns cold, most people spend more time inside their homes using fireplaces, furnaces, & heaters to keep warm. Fires can start in several places during the fall. Be careful while burning leaves outside & preparing meals around the holidays:

- Make sure your home heating system, fireplace, or wood-burning stoves are in good working order before the cold weather sets in.
- Have chimneys cleaned & furnaces inspected.
- Use a fireplace screen to keep sparks from flying out of the fireplace.
- Allow at least 3 feet of empty area around space heaters.
- Never leave a burning fire unattended.
- Make sure a fire in a fireplace is completely out before going to bed.
- Never leave candles burning if you go out or go to sleep.
- Never use your stove or oven to heat your home.

#### Food Safety

• While preparing holiday meals, keep yourself safe by following proper cooking techniques, especially when preparing meats & baked goods in the oven or when using a turkey fryer. When young children are in the kitchen, keep them away from sharp objects & hot surfaces.

#### Back to School Safety

As children return to school in the fall, they are excited & may not be paying as much attention to their surroundings as they should. Keep them safe with these fall safety tips:

- If your child's school bus is equipped with seat belts, make sure your child uses them.
- If your child walks to school or waits at a bus stop, wearing clothes that are brightly colored makes them more visible to drivers.
- Children that ride bicycles to school should always wear a helmet.
- Have your child use a rolling backpack if possible.
- A loaded backpack should not weigh more than 10-20% of the weight of the child.

#### Fall Driving Safety

With the fall season comes shorter days making it more difficult to see children playing or people walking & riding bicycles outside as it gets dark. It is also harder to see motorcycles & other cars. Deer also might be a driving hazard in the colder months.

All information found at [hardhat.com](http://hardhat.com), [eHow.com](http://eHow.com), [safety.lovetoknow.com](http://safety.lovetoknow.com), & [aspcad.org](http://aspcad.org)





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## Fall Season Safety Part 2

- Children love to play in piles of leaves. Use extra caution where leaves are piled at curbside.
- Always drive carefully making sure to be aware of poor visibility during certain weather conditions & times of the day.
- Keep a safe distance from the car in front of you. Wet roads make it more difficult to stop.
- Use your dimmed headlights in bad weather with decreased visibility.

### Safety Kits

- In order to be most comfortable during an inconvenience such as a power outage, homeowners should have an ample supply of candles & matches, flashlights, nonperishable food items, & even have a generator available. Drivers also should store a blanket, an extra set of warm clothes, & an emergency kit in their car.

### Walking Safety

- Everyone, especially older individuals, should be careful while walking through leaves, especially when they are wet. When snow strikes in fall, residents should make sure they clear walkways & step carefully.

### Fall Boating Safety

- Although there are many more boating accidents in the summer season, boaters involved in accidents during the fall months have a higher risk of the accident being fatal. The following are a few tips to make the fall boating season as safe as possible:

- Since fall weather can change quickly, be prepared for possible cold & wet weather even if the sun is shining. Small open boats combined with cold wet weather can lead to possible hypothermia.
- Make sure you tell a friend or family member your boating plan & your expected return time. There are fewer boaters in the fall to help in the case of an accident or emergency.
- Always wear your life jacket. If you should accidentally fall overboard, the cold water will quickly drain away your strength.

### Home Maintenance Safety

Fall is the time for yard clean-ups & readying your house for the cold winter ahead:

- Change the batteries in your smoke alarms & carbon monoxide detectors when you turn back your clocks for Daylight Saving Time. Make sure to check the alarms with the new batteries installed.
- Use extra caution when climbing ladders for fall jobs such as cleaning gutters or hanging holiday decorations. Shoes or boots may be wet causing you to slip as you climb the ladder.
- Keep your driveway & walkway clear of falling leaves. They get very slippery when they are wet.



- Check & replace any home fire extinguishes that have expired.
- Always wear work gloves when doing outside yard work.

### FALL SEASON SAFETY FOR PETS



Ah, fall—there's nothing like crisp, cool air, the first months of school & luscious foliage to get you excited for the changing seasons. Your pet, too, is probably welcoming the break from hot, sticky weather. But pet parents, beware—fall is also a time of lurking dangers for our furry friends. From household poisons to cold weather hazards, the season is a minefield! Here are some tips to keep your pet snug & healthy during the autumn months:

- The use of rodenticides increases in the fall as rodents seek shelter from the cooler temperatures by attempting to move indoors. Rodenticides are highly toxic to pets—if ingested, the results could be fatal. If you must use these products, do so with extreme caution & put them in places inaccessible to your pets.
- It's back-to-school time, & those of you with young children know that means stocking up on fun items like glue sticks, pencils, & magic markers. These items are considered “low toxicity” to pets, which means they're unlikely to cause serious problems unless large amounts are ingested. However, since gastrointestinal upset & blockages certainly are possible, be sure your children keep their school supplies out of paw's reach.
- Training tip: If you & your pooch haven't been active outdoors in a while because of the summer heat, do some remedial recall training. Dogs, like people, get rusty on their skills if they aren't using them.
- Fall & spring are mushroom seasons. While 99% of mushrooms have little or no toxicity, the 1% that are highly toxic can cause life-threatening problems in pets. Unfortunately, most of the highly toxic mushrooms are difficult to distinguish from the nontoxic ones, so the best way to keep pets from ingesting poisonous mushrooms is to keep them away from areas where any mushrooms are growing. Contact your veterinarian or the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center immediately if you witness your pet eating a wild mushroom.
- In order to generate body heat, pets who exercise heavily outdoors, or who live outdoors, should be given more food during colder seasons. Make sure horses & other outdoor animals have access to clean, fresh water that is not frozen.
- Autumn is the season when snakes who are preparing for hibernation may be particularly “grumpy,” increasing the possibility of severe bites to those unlucky pups who find themselves in the wrong place at the wrong time. Pet owners should know what kinds of venomous snakes may be in their environment—& where these snakes are most likely to be found—so they can keep pets out of those areas.
- Many people choose fall as the time to change their car's engine coolant. Ethylene glycol-based coolants are highly toxic, so spills should be cleaned up immediately. Consider switching to propylene glycol-based coolants—though they aren't completely nontoxic, they are much less toxic than other engine coolants.