Walking on Snow & Ice

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Courtesy of Ken Oswald, Safety and Security Manager for Plateau

Toolbox Talks

More Winter Safety Part 1

Most slips & falls occur the following days after a winter storm. Below are tips for walking on the snow & ice. Take care & have a safe day. Walking to & from parking lots or between buildings at work during the winter requires special attention to avoid slipping & falling. Slips & falls are some of the most frequent types of injuries that the Safety Department sees especially during the winter months. No matter how well the snow & ice is removed from parking lots or sidewalks, pedestrians will still encounter some slippery surfaces when walking outdoors in the winter. It is important for everyone to be constantly aware of these dangers & to learn to walk safely on ice & slippery surfaces.

Reminders:

- Wear appropriate shoes.
- Walk in designated walkways.
- Watch where you are walking.
- Walk slowly & don't rush!
- Plan ahead & give yourself enough time.

It is recommended to keep these important safety tips in mind:

✧ Choosing Appropriate Clothing:

- During bad weather, avoid boots or shoes with smooth soles & heels, such as plastic & leather soles. Instead, wear shoes or boots that provide traction on snow & ice; boots made of non-slip rubber or neoprene with grooved soles are best.
- Wear a heavy, bulky coat that will cushion you if you should fall.
- Wear a bright scarf or hat or reflective gear so drivers can see you.
- Keep warm, but make sure you can hear what's going on around you.
- During the day, wear sunglasses to help you see better & avoid hazards.
- Whatever you wear, make sure it doesn't block your vision or make it hard for you to hear traffic.

✧Walking Over Ice: Walk Like a Penguin

- In cold temperatures, approach with caution & assume that all wet, dark areas on pavements are slippery & icy. Dew or water vapor can freeze on cold surfaces, forming an extra-thin, nearly invisible layer of ice that can look like a wet spot on the pavement.
- Walk in designated walkways as much as possible. Taking shortcuts over snow piles & other frozen areas can be hazardous. Look ahead when you walk; a snow- or ice-covered sidewalk or driveway, especially if on a hill, may require travel along its grassy edge for traction.
- If you must walk in the street, walk against the flow of traffic, as close to the curb as you can.
- Taking shortcuts through areas where snow & ice removal is not feasible can be hazardous. Try to avoid straying from the beaten path.
- Point your feet out slightly like a penguin! Spreading your feet out slightly while walking on ice increases your center of gravity.
- Bend slightly & walk flat-footed with your center of gravity directly over the feet as much as possible.
- Extend your arms out to your sides to maintain balance. Beware if you are carrying a heavy backpack or other loadyour sense of balance will be off.
    - If you must carry a load, try not to carry too much; leave your hands & arms free to balance yourself.
- Keep your hands out of your pockets. Hands in your pockets while walking decreases your center of gravity & balance. You can help break your fall with your hands free if you do start to slip.
- Watch where you are stepping & GO S-L-O-W-L-Y !! This will help your reaction time to changes in traction.
- When walking on steps, always use the hand railings & plant your feet firmly on each step.
- Use special care when entering & exiting vehicles; use the vehicle for support.
- Take short steps or shuffle for stability. It also helps to stop occasionally to break momentum.

✧ Dealing with Traffic:

Another hazard of walking on icy ground is dealing with poor road conditions. Keep these safety tips in mind if you're going to be crossing the street:

- Before stepping off the curb, make sure all cars & trucks have come to a complete stop. Motorists sometimes underestimate the time it takes to stop, often unintentionally sliding into the crosswalk.
- Due to poor road conditions, motorists may not be able to stop or slow down for pedestrians. Avoid crossing in areas where driver visibility is lowthe cross traffic may not be able to stop in time.
- Be on the lookout for vehicles sliding in your direction.
- Vehicles should yield to snow removal equipment in streets & parking lots.

✧ Indoor Safety:

Walking over slippery floor can be just as dangerous as walking over ice! Keep these tips in mind if you are entering a building:

- Remove as much snow & water from your boots as you can. Water from melting ice on the floor can lead to slippery conditions.
- Notice that floors & stairs may be wet & slippery; walk carefully especially by outer doors.

✧ If You Should Fall:

- Try to avoid landing on your knees, wrists, or spine. Try to fall on a fleshy part of your body, such as your side. Wearing thick clothing can help prevent injury to the bony parts of your body.
- Try to relax your muscles if you fall. You'll injure yourself less if you are relaxed.
- If you fall backward, make a conscious effort to tuck your chin so your head won't hit the ground with full force.

Safety First, Safety Always!

Toolbox Talks

More Winter Safety Part 2

Cold Weather Safety Tips

January 2, 2013

Information from OSHA, National Safety Council, & American Red Cross

Today's post comes to us courtesy of Ken Oswald

Brrrrrrrace Yourself for the Coooold!

Cold arctic fronts will be headed our directions this winter & the temperatures & wild chills could drop to dangerously cold levels. These very cold temperatures can be hazardous, even deadly, to your health. Of course, no matter the temperature, the work must still get done. Workers can be exposed to hazards from cold indoors as well as outside. It's very cold, for instance, in food storage areas. However, since it is January, it makes sense to be aware on working in frigid conditions outside. As with all potential hazards, prevention is the best method for staying safe in the cold.

Prevent cold problems by taking these precautions:

- Limit exposure to cold, especially if it's windy or humid if possible.
- Be especially careful if you're older, overweight, have allergies, or poor circulation.
- Know that problems can arise in above-freezing temperatures.
- Know that problems can arise from touching a subfreezing object.
- Be especially careful if you smoke, drink, or take medications.
- Don't bathe, smoke, or drink alcohol before going into the cold.
- Wear layers of loose dry clothing with cotton or wool under layers & a waterproof top layer.
- Cover head, hands, feet, & face.
- Dry or change wet clothing immediately.
- Keep moving when they're in the cold.
- Take regular breaks in warm areas.
- Move to a warm area if they feel very cold or numb.
- Drink a warm, nonalcoholic, decaffeinated beverage.

According to OSHA, cold stress can occur when the body is unable to warm itself. This can lead to tissue damage & possibly death.

Four factors contribute to cold stress:

- Cold air temperatures
- High wind
- Dampness of the air
- Contact with cold water or cold surfaces

A cold environment forces the body to work harder to maintain its temperature. Cold air, water, & snow all draw heat from the body. OSHA also points out that while below-freezing conditions & inadequate protection can bring about cold stress, problems can also occur with much higher temperatures, even in the 50s, when coupled with rain & wind. What happens in the cold? Energy is used to warm the body's internal temperature. Over time, the body will begin to shift blood from the extremities & outer skin to the core (the chest & abdomen). This allows exposed skin & the extremities to cool rapidly, increasing the risk of problems.

Winter Weather Terms: The National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration gives us the following definitions

✧ **Winter Storm Warning:** Issued when hazardous winter weather in the form of heavy snow, heavy freezing rain, or heavy sleet is imminent or occurring. Winter Storm Warnings are usually issued 12 to 24 hours before the event is expected to begin.

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✧**Winter Storm Watch:** Alerts the public to the possibility of a blizzard, heavy snow, heavy freezing rain, or heavy sleet. Winter Storm Watches are usually issued 12 to 48 hours before the beginning of a Winter Storm.

✧ **Winter Storm Outlook:** Issued prior to a Winter Storm Watch. The Outlook is given when forecasters believe winter storm conditions are possible & are usually issued 3 to 5 days in advance of a winter storm.

✧ **Blizzard Warning:** Issued for sustained or gusty winds of 35 mph or more, & falling or blowing snow creating visibilities at or below ¼ mile; these conditions should persist for at least three hours.

✧ **Lake Effect Snow Warning:** Issued when heavy lake effect snow is imminent or occurring.

✧ **Lake Effect Snow Advisory:** Issued when accumulation of lake effect snow will cause significant inconvenience.

✧ **Wind Chill Warning:** Issued when wind chill temperatures are expected to be hazardous to life within several minutes of exposure.

✧ **Wind Chill Advisory:** Issued when wind chill temperatures are expected to be a significant inconvenience to life with prolonged exposure, &, if caution is not exercised, could lead to hazardous exposure.

✧ **Winter Weather Advisories:** Issued for accumulations of snow, freezing rain, freezing drizzle, & sleet which will cause significant inconveniences &, if caution is not exercised, could lead to life-threatening situations.

✧ **Dense Fog Advisory:** Issued when fog will reduce visibility to ¼ mile or less over a widespread area.

✧ **Snow Flurries:** Light snow falling for short durations. No accumulation or light dusting is all that is expected.

✧ **Snow Showers:** Snow falling at varying intensities for brief periods of time. Some accumulation is possible.

✧ **Snow Squalls:** Brief, intense snow showers accompanied by strong, gusty winds. Accumulation may be significant. Snow squalls are best known in the Great Lakes region.

✧ **Blowing Snow:** Wind-driven snow that reduces visibility & causes significant drifting. Blowing snow may be snow that is falling &/or loose snow on the ground picked up by the wind.

✧ **Sleet:** Rain drops that freeze into ice pellets before reaching the ground. Sleet usually bounces when hitting a surface & does not stick to objects. However, it can accumulate like snow & cause a hazard to motorists.

✧ **Freezing Rain:** Rain that falls onto a surface with a temperature below freezing. This causes it to freeze to surfaces, such as trees, cars, & roads, forming a coating or glaze of ice. Even small accumulations of ice can cause a significant hazard.