



Toolbox Talks



Winter Safety Part 1

Getting Ready For Winter Work

- Two big concerns of working or spending time outdoors in cold weather are frostbite & hypothermia. Both can occur at much higher temperatures than many people realize. Exposed skin can start to freeze at just 28°F & deep frostbite can cause blood clots & even gangrene. Hypothermia is a potentially fatal condition caused by loss of body temperature, even in winter conditions people might not consider particularly nasty. Symptoms include fatigue, nausea, confusion, lightheadedness, & profuse sweating. Between 1979 and 1995, an average of 723 Americans died each year as the result of hypothermia.
- Wear the right gloves for the work you are doing. Gloves should have enough insulation to keep you warm and prevent frostbite, but be thin enough so you can feel what you are doing if you are manipulating controls or tools. Gloves which are too thick can also make your hands and wrists work too hard trying to hold on to objects, causing repetitive strain injury.
- Dress in layers of light-weight clothing which keep you warmer than a single layer of heavy clothes. Remove layers as necessary to prevent overheating and perspiring which can lead to chills or hypothermia later. Wet clothing is 20 times less warm than dry clothing. Wear a hat and you'll stay much warmer when working in cold conditions. As much as half your body heat can go up in steam off the top of a bare head. Protect your ears from frostbite as well by wearing a hat that will cover your ears, or use ear muffs.
- While donning a scarf or muffler might help keep your neck warm in the cold weather, it could also kill you if you work near rotating machinery. Check your winter wardrobe for entanglement hazards such as loose sleeves and dangling drawstrings.
- Keep your safety eyewear from fogging up in the cold. Investigate anti-fog coatings and wipes to see if these products are appropriate for your eyewear.
- Look at the soles of your winter footwear. Your shoes or boots should have adequate tread to prevent slips and falls on wet or icy surfaces. Slow down when walking across slippery surfaces and be especially careful on ladders, platforms and stairways.
- Eat winter-weight meals. This does not mean a high fat diet, but one with enough calories and nutrients to give you the fuel you need. Start with a breakfast of whole grain cereal and toast.
- Get plenty of rest. Working in the cold and even traveling to and from work in the winter takes lots of energy. Cold weather can strain your heart, even if you aren't overexerting yourself, so be sure to pace yourself when lifting heavy objects or shoveling snow.

Clearing Snow & Ice Safely

Heart attacks, back strain, & muscle soreness are just a few of the problems attributed to shoveling snow. Here are a few safety tips for snow shoveling & blowing:

- If you've ever had a heart attack, if you have heart disease, high blood pressure, or high cholesterol, you probably don't want to do the shoveling yourself. Know the warning signs of a heart attack including chest, shoulder, or neck pain, dizziness, fainting, shortness of breath, or nausea. If you think you're having a heart attack, seek medical assistance immediately.
- Smokers may want to resort to a snow blower - & certainly you should never smoke while shoveling. Tobacco smoke constricts blood vessels just as cold air does; the combination can be dangerous.
- Caffeinated products are strongly discouraged as well. The caffeine may increase your heart rate & cause your blood vessels to constrict, just like smoking does. Water is obviously the best to rehydrate, but if something hot is needed, drink hot chocolate or herbal tea.
- Dress in several layers so you can remove a layer as needed.
- Warm up your muscles before shoveling by walking for a few minutes or marching in place. Stretch the muscles in your arms & legs, because warm muscles will work more efficiently & be less likely to be injured.
- While shoveling, stand with your feet about hip width for balance & keep the shovel close to your body. Bend from the knees (not the back) & tighten your stomach muscles as you lift the snow.
- Avoid twisting movements. If you need to move the snow to one side, reposition your feet to face the direction the snow will be going.
- Push, rather than lift, snow when possible. If the snow is wet & heavy, take smaller loads.
- Most importantly, listen to your body. Stop if you feel pain!

Winter Road Safety Kit:

Did you know that 70% of deaths during snow or ice storms occur in vehicles? Better to be safe than sorry when winter weather strikes. Have a Winter Road Safety Kit in your vehicle. Here are some recommendations:

- Cell Phone & Car Charger
- Blankets/Sleeping Bag
- Flashlight & Extra Batteries
- First-Aid Kit & Any Necessary Medications
- High-Calorie, Non-Perishable Food like granola bars, dried fruit, beef jerky, nuts (if canned, be sure to have a can opener)
- Bottles of Water
- Extra Clothing to keep dry
- Jumper Cables
- Tow Rope
- Tool Kit
- Windshield Scrapers & Brush
- Small Shovel
- Sharp Knife
- Bag of Sand or Kitty Litter for traction
- Paper Towels
- Empty Tin Can to melt snow for drinking water
- Lighter/Waterproof Matches
- Extra Windshield Washer Fluid
- Help Sign/Brightly Colored Strip of Cloth to tie to antenna or hang out of your window
- Candles
- Flares or Roadway Detectors
- Road Maps



Toolbox Talks

Winter Safety Part 2

12 Tips for Winter Driving



Driving requires all the care & caution possible any time of year. But winter driving has even greater challenges because of wet & icy road surfaces, longer hours of darkness, & poor visibility because of snow, rain, & fog.

1. Allow enough time to get to your destination. Rushing in difficult driving conditions can lead to an accident. Turn your radio on to listen to the road report & weather forecast. Leave a few minutes earlier in the morning, & allow plenty of time to get to work. Buckle up your seat belt before you start driving.

2. Stay alert. Don't drive when you are under the influence of alcohol, drugs, or certain medications. Read the labels of prescription drugs & over-the-counter medicines to determine if they can cause drowsiness. Driving demands your full attention.

3. Stay calm. Sometimes other drivers will become frustrated with slow-moving traffic. Keep your temper, & don't let other drivers aggravate you. Maintain a safe speed & drive defensively.

4. Keep a safe distance between you & other vehicles. The "two second rule" works well on dry roads & in ideal conditions, but in winter, you should extend it to four seconds.

5. Keep your car well-maintained & in good working order. This includes, having good tread on your tires, the engine tuned-up for winter, & all lights functioning properly. In colder climates, you may need to add anti-freeze to the radiator. In some areas, gasoline antifreeze may be required.

6. Clean your windows & headlights frequently. Keep your windshield washer fluid topped up. Good visibility is essential to safe driving. Clean your windows & headlights of ice or snow before starting out, & repeat frequently throughout your trip.

7. Drive appropriately for the road conditions. The posted speed limit may be too fast under winter conditions. Driving on a wet road can cause hydroplaning as a thin barrier of water builds up between your tires & the road surface, causing your vehicle to slip. If you begin to lose control of your steering, take your foot off the gas.

8. Stay with your vehicle if it breaks down. Put on your emergency flashers & wait for assistance. Carry a sign for your window asking other motorists to tell the police you need help.

9. Wait out bad weather. Strong icy winds in combination with snow or dust can make it impossible to see where you are driving - or walking. Under these conditions, it is usually safest to stay with your vehicle & wait out the storm.

10. Plan your moves carefully. In slippery conditions, never jam on your brakes in a panic to stop, you will most likely skid & lose control of the vehicle. Instead, pump your brakes gently a few times.

11. Avoid driving through deep puddles, especially at high speeds. The water can make your brakes less effective, & if deep enough, can cause serious engine damage. If you must drive through water, & you are not sure about the depth, slow right down & cautiously inch forward until you are certain it is safe.

12. Quit driving when you begin to feel sleepy. If you have a long distance to drive, take frequent short breaks for fresh air & a walk around the vehicle.

Side Note: There are now 'Do Not Operate' Tags available for broken or damaged tools & equipment. They will be mounted to the wall in the shop. If you need to use one, fill out the form on the back, tie wrap the tag to the item, & send an email to Doug to let him know the item & location. There are (2) tags in each vehicle as well, each labeled with the vehicle name. An additional (2) tags are designated 'Travel Tags' for days when personal or rental vehicles are used. If you're using a personal or rental vehicle, remember to take them with you.