

# Slips and falls

## Prevent wintertime falls that impact your work comp costs

If your employee falls and is injured in your parking lot it's likely the employee is eligible for workers' compensation benefits—regardless of who's responsible for snow removal.

Employees are eligible for workers' compensation benefits when an injury occurs in the course of employment. Generally, injuries sustained going to and coming from the workplace are not deemed to have occurred in the course of employment.

One exception, however, is the so-called "parking lot rule." This holds that, if an injury occurs in a parking lot or other off-premises area over which the employer has some control, the injury may be considered work-related and subject to workers' compensation benefits.

It is important to contact your landlord if snow removal is not up to par. Let the landlord know that your employees are in danger of falling due to snow and ice. Be specific about the areas that need to be addressed—the steps near the front door or the sidewalk near the north end of the parking lot, for example.

The third party may be liable as well. If your organization leases office space from a property manager or if you employ a third party for snow removal services and your employee fell due to poor maintenance or slippery conditions in the parking lot, you or your insurer may be able to recover some workers' compensation benefits from the third party.

Do what you can to prevent winter slips and falls by thinking outside the box.

### Be proactive. Deal with the hazards.

Recognize hazardous conditions and take proper precautions. Remember, sometimes pointing out the obvious is necessary.

**Entrances and exits.** You know they need to be in good condition and that snow, water and ice are hazardous. Instead of trying to shovel and salt all of the entrances, consider closing a couple for the winter.

- 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.
- Make sure that handrails on stairways and walkways are secure. If someone fell and grabbed the rail, it should be secure.

### Parking lots and sidewalks.

- Observe employees' walking patterns. Consider making walking paths that are highlighted with yard flags or lights.
- Mark trouble spots with police tape. That way you can ensure the path is properly cared for and employees are using a safe walkway instead of walking through snow banks and over slippery curbs.
- Remember to adequately salt walkways. The appearance of a clear path may cause people to proceed with less caution.
- Be sure to remove remelted snow and ice after the application of winter salt.

## Share these winter tips with employees

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

- High heels should not be worn outdoors during winter weather. 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.
- Once inside a building, don't walk too fast and avoid making sharp changes in directions.

## Give employees the winter safety quiz.

Photocopy the winter safety quiz for your employees. It will help make your employees more aware of winter hazards and help them prepare for winter weather.

## Helpful links

National Weather Service:  
[www.nws.noaa.gov](http://www.nws.noaa.gov)

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA): [www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov)

For specific questions or assistance with your Loss Prevention Program, call your SFM Loss Prevention representative at (952) 838-4200 or (800) 937-1181.

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# Winter safety quiz -- Photocopy and distribute to your employees

## Test your safety knowledge

Winter Safety

Don't cheat yourself 😊. First fold the page so you can't see the answers. Next, complete the quiz. Then unfold the page to see how you did.

### Questions

1. When cold-weather activities require physical exertion, layering is the best approach. True or False
2. In cold, wet, windy weather a good choice for outer clothing would be:
  - a. Goose down insulation
  - b. Wool
  - c. A synthetic fleece
3. In extremely cold weather, one of the most important items is a warm:
  - a. Pair of gloves
  - b. Coat
  - c. Hat
4. First aid for frostbite includes vigorously rubbing affected areas. True or False
5. Dehydration is a common physical problem in cold weather. True or False

### Answers

- True.** Trapped perspiration and overheating while walking or climbing is the enemy, and the way to defeat it is to wear multiple layers, removing outer clothing while exercising and putting them back on while stationary.
- b. Wool.** Goose down loses its loft and warmth when wet, and most synthetic fleeces offer poor wind resistance. Down can be covered with waterproof materials, of course, and fleece can be backed with a windproof liner—but natural wool retains warmth when wet and, if close-woven, offers good wind resistance.
- c. Hat.** A tremendous amount of heat loss takes place from the head and neck. A well-insulated hat goes a long way toward keeping the whole body warm. A smart trick is a muffler or even a bandanna tied around the neck.
- False.** Frostbite is freezing of the affected area. While rubbing may bring back circulation to chilled hands, feet or face before frostbite actually sets in, it will only cause more tissue damage if actual frostbite has occurred.
- True.** In cold weather, people tend not to feel thirsty, and dehydration can be a severe problem. Dehydration can be just as severe in extreme heat, and just as dangerous. Concentrate on drinking plenty of fluid whether or not you feel thirsty. Eating snow is only a partial answer, for it takes surprising quantities of snow to offer significant amounts of water.