



# Prevent

## An employer's guide: winter slips and falls

As the temperature drops, the number of slips and falls rise. Winter's wet and icy conditions are dangerous and employers need to take the right precautions to prevent employees from falling.

Use these suggestions to help keep your employees slip-and-fall-free this winter.

### Keep your workplace safe

- Don't get caught by surprise. Monitor the weather and changing conditions.
- Keep adequate supplies of snow and ice removal tools in accessible areas.
- Shovel and apply ice melt as necessary to keep walking areas clean and dry.
- Watch for areas where ice tends to form. Remove ice accumulations promptly and apply additional ice melt to prevent buildup.
- Provide good lighting and clear path markings in parking lots and walkways.
- Clearly identify steps, ramps and other elevation changes that might not be visible in snowy conditions.
- Contract with a snow removal company to keep your parking lots clear of snow and ice.
- Place high quality, beveled edge mats in walking areas subject to water or snow accumulation. Change mats regularly to ensure those in place are dry.
- Apply a slip-resistant floor treatment in areas that tend to become wet and slippery. Clean and maintain these floors according to the manufacturer's specifications.

### Create a falls program

- **Set standards** for the condition of your parking lot and paths, for appropriate footwear and safety gear.
- **Define everyone's role** in preventing slips and falls.
- **Communicate roles and standards** to all staff.
- **Train workers** responsible for keeping lots and walk ways clear.
- **Check that standards** are met and that the program works.
- **Acknowledge success** and make improvements.

### Hazards to watch for

Remember, while snow falls gently, people don't. Be on the lookout for fall hazards.

- ✓ Slippery surfaces due to water, ice or snow from footwear
- ✓ Snowy and ice-covered sidewalks
- ✓ Freeze and thaw cycles
- ✓ Melted snow or ice, or grit at the entrance of buildings
- ✓ Black ice—a thin, nearly invisible coating of ice caused when temperatures rise above freezing and quickly drop below freezing
- ✓ Obstructed sidewalks and roadways
- ✓ Packages that are too large or heavy that can affect an employee's balance or obstruct view

## **Train employees to:**

- Wear appropriate winter footwear that is well-insulated, waterproof, has a non-slip, thick sole and a wide, low heel. Ice grippers can also improve walking on ice and snow.
- Use walkways that have been salted or shoveled. Discourage taking shortcuts over snow piles and in areas where snow and ice removal is not feasible.
- Test your travel path for slickness by sliding your shoe or boot on it before proceeding.
- Do the penguin shuffle.
  - Walk flat footed.
  - Take short steps to maintain your center of balance over your feet.
  - Keep your head up and don't lean forward.
  - Walk slowly. Never run on snow- or ice-covered surfaces.

- When entering or exiting vehicles, use the vehicle for support. Never jump from vehicles or equipment.
- When entering a building, remove snow and water from footwear so as not to create wet, slippery conditions indoors.
- Spread salt or sand when you see icy spots. You can help reduce the number of falls by taking action.

To reach your employees with a creative twist on safety habits, you can take advantage of a series of materials—"Do the Penguin Shuffle"—created specifically for SFM policyholders. Go to [www.sfmic.com](http://www.sfmic.com) to download or order posters, paycheck stuffers, table tents and more.

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