



Toolbox Talk: Slips, Trips, and Falls – Winter Safety Tips

Introduction/Overview:

In 2018, 5,250 workers in the United States suffered fatal work injuries, a 2% increase from 2017 and the highest number of fatal work injuries in a decade. Slips, trips, and falls accounted for 791 fatalities, second only to motor vehicle accidents. Non-fatal slips, trips, and falls saw an increase of 12,400 during the same time frame.

With the arrival of winter weather, your chance of having a slip, trip, or fall rises considerably. Most wintertime incidents occur on parking lots, roadways, driveways, and walkways while walking between the workplace and vehicles. Indoor hazards also exist at entryways, hallways, and other rooms where ice and snow have been tracked in from outside.

Statistics:

According to Tracy Haas Depa, Assistant Editor for the National Safety Council's publication *Safety + Health*, in 2014, there were 42,480 workplace injuries and illnesses involving ice, sleet, or snow that required at least one day away from work. Data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics say 82% of these injuries and illnesses resulted from falls on the same level. The National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) reports that 27% of the 900,380 nonfatal work injuries resulting in days away from work in 2018 were related to slips, trips, and falls.

Talking Points:

- When walking on an icy or snow-covered walkway, take short steps and walk at a slower pace. Take shorter strides and step flat-footed as opposed to striking heel first.
- Do not walk with your hands in your pockets and avoid carrying items in your hands.
- Avoid stairways and curbs that have not been cleared. Always use the handrail and plant your feet firmly on each step.
- Watch for black ice, especially in areas that have been cleared of snow. Dew, fog, or water vapor can freeze on cold surfaces, forming a nearly invisible ice layer. Test any surface that appears wet before walking on it.
- Use extra care when entering and exiting vehicles and use the vehicle for support.
- Upon entering a building, watch for slippery floors. Remove as much snow from your footwear as possible before entering the building.
- Appropriate footwear is a must for winter weather. If boots or other high-traction footwear do not fit your fashion sense, change into your dress shoes after safely inside the building.
- Be prepared to fall. Avoid using your arms to break your fall. Tuck your chin toward your chest if you fall back to avoid striking the back of your head.

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Additional Discussion Notes:

Final Thoughts:

Stay alert during winter weather. Do not be distracted by texting or talking on your phone while walking in slippery conditions. Also, be aware of vehicular traffic when crossing roadways as they may not be able to stop for you. Remember: *Ice and Snow Take it Slow*. This applies to walking as well as driving.

NOTE: Always promote discussion with the attendees. If a question comes up that no one in attendance can answer, please contact OWC or the Loss Control Innovations consultants for assistance.

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References:

National Bureau of Labor Statistics, TED: The Economics Daily: *A look at work injuries, illnesses, and fatalities on Workers' Memorial Day, April 28, 2020*

<https://www.bls.gov/opub/ted/2020/a-look-at-work-injuries-illnesses-and-fatalities-on-workers-memorial-day.htm>

National Safety Council Safety and Health Magazine, *"Don't slip up this winter,"*

Tracy Haas Depa, Assistant Editor, *December 19, 2017*

<https://www.safetyandhealthmagazine.com/articles/16523-dont-slip-up-this-winter>

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Seven Statistics on Winter Workplace Injuries: Ice, Ice, Baby

<https://www.bongarde.com/seven-statistics-on-winter-workplace-injuries-ice-ice-baby/>

UMPC Health Beat January 30, 2015

10 Tips to Avoid Winter Slips, Trips, and Falls

<https://share.upmc.com/2015/01/10-tips-avoid-winter-slips-trips-falls/>

Center for Disease Control and Prevention, National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health

Traumatic Occupational Injuries Fast Facts

<https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/injury/fastfacts.html#:~:text=27%25%20of%20the%20900%2C380%20n%20fatal,in%20time%20away%20from%20work>

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