

Safely Walking on Snow and Ice.

Walking to or from car parks or between buildings at work during the winter requires special attention to avoid slipping and falling. Slips and falls are some of the most frequent types of injuries that the Emergency and Safety Team sees – especially after periods of snow and ice as we have recently experienced. No matter how well snow and ice is removed from car parks and pavements, pedestrians will encounter some slippery surfaces when walking outdoors in the winter. It is important for everyone to be constantly aware of these dangers and to 'learn' to walk safely on ice and slippery surfaces.

Reminders:

- Wear appropriate shoes.
- Walk in designated walkways
- Watch where you are walking
- Walk slowly and don't rush. Plan ahead and 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 and heels, such as plastic and leather soles. Instead, wear shoes or boots that provide traction on snow and ice; boots made of non-slip rubber or neoprene with grooved soles are best.
- Wear a heavy, bulky coat that will cushion you should you fall.
- Wear a bright scarf or hat or reflective gear so drivers can see you.
- Keep warm, but make sure you can hear what is going on around you.

Walk like a penguin..!

- In cold temperatures, approach with caution and assume that all wet, dark areas on pavements are slippery and icy. Dew or water vapour 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 and other areas can be hazardous. Look ahead when you walk; a snow or ice covered pavement or driveway, especially on a hill, may require travel along its grassy edge for traction. If you must walk on the road, walk against the flow of traffic, as close to the curb as possible.
- Taking short cuts through areas where snow and 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 centre of gravity. Bend slightly and walk flat footed with your centre of gravity directly over your feet as much as possible.
- Extend your arms out from your sides to maintain balance. Beware if you are carrying anything – your sense of balance will be off. If you must carry a load try not to carry too much; leave your hands and arms free to balance yourself.

- Keep your hands out of your pockets. Hands in your pockets while walking decreases your centre of gravity and balance. You can help break your fall with your hands free if you do start to slip.
- Watch where you are stepping and go slowly. This will help with your reaction time to changes in traction.
- When walking on steps always use the hand rails and plant your feet firmly on each step. Use special care when entering and 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 road:

- Before stepping off the curb make sure all cars and other vehicles have come to a complete stop. Motorists sometimes underestimate the time it takes to stop, often unintentionally sliding into a crossing point for example.
- 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 low – traffic may not be able to stop in time.
- Be on the lookout for vehicles sliding in your direction.

Once inside

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

- Remove as much snow and water from your footwear as you can. Water from melting ice on the floor can lead to slippery conditions. Notice that floors and stairs can be wet and slippery – walk carefully especially by outer doors. If the floor is excessively wet, do something about it and don't assume that someone else will already have reported it.

If You Should Fall

- Try to avoid landing on your knees, wrists or spine. Try to fall on the 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 will injure yourself less if you are relaxed. If you fall backwards, make a conscious effort to tuck your chin in so your head won't hit the ground with full force.