

Walking Safely on Ice

Walking to and from parking lots 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 are seen — especially during the winter months.

No matter how well the snow and ice is removed from parking lots or sidewalks, pedestrians will still 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.

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 if you should fall.
- Wear a bright scarf or hat or reflective gear so drivers can see you.
- Keep warm, but make sure you can hear what's going on around you.
- During the day, wear sunglasses to help you see better and avoid hazards.
- Whatever you wear, make sure it doesn't block your vision or make it hard for you to hear traffic.

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.

Walking Over Ice



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 vapor 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 frozen areas can be hazardous. Look ahead when you walk; a snow- or ice-covered sidewalk or driveway, especially if on a hill, may require travel along its grassy edge for traction.
 - If you must walk in the street, walk against the flow of traffic, as close to the curb as you can.
 - Taking shortcuts 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! (see picture) Spreading your feet out slightly while walking on ice increases your center of gravity.
- Bend slightly and walk flat-footed with your center of gravity directly over the feet as much as possible.
- Extend your arms out to your sides to maintain balance. Beware if you are carrying a heavy backpack or other load—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 center 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 S-L-O-W-L-Y !!** This will help your reaction time to changes in traction.
- When walking on steps, always use the hand railings 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.

A Few More Tips

Just exactly what can we do to minimize the risk of slips due to icy surfaces?

- Avoid routes that have not been cleared or appear to be glazed over.
- Avoid carrying large objects or packages that may obstruct your view or cause you to lose your balance.
- Carry a small bag of grit, sand or non clumping cat litter in your jacket pocket or handbag, to sprinkle when you are confronted with icy sidewalks, steps, bus stops, etc.

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 street:

- Before stepping off the curb, make sure all cars and trucks have come to a complete stop. Motorists sometimes underestimate the time it takes to stop, often unintentionally sliding into the crosswalk.
- 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—the cross traffic may not be able to stop in time.
- Be on the lookout for vehicles sliding in your direction.
- Vehicles should yield to snow removal equipment in streets and parking lots.

Indoor Safety

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

- Remove as much snow and water from your boots as you can. Water from melting ice on the floor can lead to slippery conditions.
- Notice that floors and stairs may be wet and slippery—walk carefully especially by outer doors.

If You Should Fall

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