



Tailgate Safety Talk

Information You Can Use to Prevent Accidents & Injuries

With Ohio's winter weather comes an increased risk of slips and falls due to icy or snow-covered sidewalks, parking lots and work areas. According to the National Safety Council, these injuries account for about 15% to 20% of all workers' compensation costs. Now is the time to ensure precautions are taken to minimize the risk of slip and fall injuries in the winter months ahead. Here are some tips for winter safety around the county garage, yard, outpost, district and CO locations:

- Keep adequate supplies of snow and ice removal tools in readily accessible areas. Shovel and salt as often as necessary to keep walking areas clean and dry.
- Make a note of areas where ice tends to form and deal with those right away. A single person should be assigned responsibility for monitoring and coordinating snow and ice removal efforts.
- Limit walking to designated walkways and don't take shortcuts over snow piles and in areas where snow and ice can't be removed.
- Test the travel path for slickness by sliding your shoe or boot on it before walking. Take short steps to maintain your center of balance over your feet. Walk slowly and never run on snow or ice covered surfaces.
- Place high quality, beveled-edge mats in walking areas subject to water or snow accumulation. Change these mats regularly to ensure those in place are reasonably dry.
- Be extremely careful when climbing on and off trucks and heavy equipment, especially after running a snow route. Always observe the "three points of contact" rule and never jump off a truck or loader. Watch out for icy conditions on the garage floor, wash bay, or outdoor location when power washing equipment after a storm has passed.

While snow removal and frequent salting can help, there are times when totally eliminating the hazard can't be done right away. If you're the first to arrive at work, being aware of the danger of slipping and falling is important. You should anticipate the fact that you're likely to fall at any moment when walking on ice. If you do fall, you should try to avoid landing on an elbow, knee or outstretched hand. Taking the full impact of a fall on a small area many times results in a broken bone.

As strange as it may sound, the "art of falling" has a key point here. Try to make your arms and legs strike the ground at the same time, just before the rest of your body makes contact. You can then use your shoulder, thigh and knees and a shock-absorber. If you can do this, you can break your fall by spreading out the worst of the striking force.

If you wear leather-soled shoes in bad weather, you're asking for trouble. That's because there's no friction between your shoes and the ice. Wear shoes with low heels and soles with slip-resistant material such as soft rubber, neoprene, or crepe. There's a lot of that type of footwear available. Take shorter steps to keep your center of gravity right over your feet.

Smooth and flat surfaces such as those on an ice rink are less hazardous than the usually rough surface found on roadways, parking lots and sidewalks. That's because there are fewer places to cause a stumble, trip or twist. Also, snow is a lot less slippery than ice, so it might be better to drive or walk through snow to avoid an icy spot. However, there might be a surprise - snow on top of ice is extremely dangerous and more slippery than bare ice. Also, try not to track snow into buildings. Wipe your feet at the entrance so others won't slip and fall on melted snow.

Users of this tailgate talk are advised to determine the suitability of the information as it applies to local situations and work practices and its conformance with applicable laws and regulations.