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(Regional)-Tips For Snow Removal And Walking On Snow And Ice



By: Roxie Graham-Marski Posted at: 02/25/2013 08:25 AM

(REGIONAL)-Snow storm cleanup and recovery activities can pose a variety of risks for workers. The U.S. Department of Labor shares some basic safety information regarding hazards associated with winter storms, such as snow shoveling and walking on snow and ice.

Shoveling Snow

What hazards are associated with shoveling snow?

Shoveling snow can be a strenuous activity, particularly because cold weather can be taxing on the body and can create the potential for exhaustion, dehydration, back injuries, or heart attacks. In addition to following the tips for avoiding frostbite and hypothermia, such as taking frequent breaks and drinking plenty of fluids (while avoiding ones with caffeine or alcohol), there are a variety of other precautions workers can take to avoid injuries while removing snow. Workers should warm-up before the activity, scoop small amounts of snow at a time, push the snow instead of lifting when possible, and use a proper form if lifting is necessary—keeping the back straight and lifting with the legs.

Slips and Falls

How do I walk safely on snow and ice?

When appropriate, clear walking surfaces of snow and ice and use salt or its equivalent. In addition, the following precautions will help reduce the likelihood of any injuries:

§ Walking on snow or ice is especially treacherous and wearing proper footwear is essential. A pair of well insulated boots with good rubber treads is a must for walking during or after a winter storm. Keeping a pair of rubber over-shoes with good treads which fit over your street shoes is a good idea during the winter months.

§ When walking on an icy or snow-covered walkway, take short steps and walk at a slower pace so you can react quickly to a change in traction.

§ When walking on a sidewalk that has not been cleared, if you choose to walk in the street, walk *against* the traffic and as close to the curb as you can.

§ Be on the lookout for vehicles which may have lost traction and are slipping towards you. Be aware that approaching vehicles may not be able to stop at crosswalks or traffic signals.

§ At night, wear bright clothing or reflective gear, as dark clothing will make it difficult for motorists to see you.

§ During the daytime, wear sunglasses to help you see better and avoid hazards.

Additional information is available at http://www.osha.gov/dts/weather/winter_storm/response.html.

Clearing Snow from Roofs and Working at Heights

Following a winter storm, workers should employ standard protections when working at heights and should also be aware of the potential for unexpected hazards due to the weather. Employers should provide and ensure the use of fall protection and provide and maintain ladders. In addition, workers should use caution around surfaces that have been weighed down by snow, as they may collapse. For more information, see [OSHA's Hazard Alert: Falls and Other Hazards to Workers Removing Snow From Rooftops and Other Elevated Surfaces](#).

Carbon Monoxide Hazards

Every year, workers die from carbon monoxide poisoning, usually while using fuel-burning equipment and tools in buildings or semi-enclosed spaces without adequate ventilation. This can be especially true during the winter months when employees use this type of equipment in indoor spaces that have been sealed tightly to block out cold temperatures and wind. Symptoms of carbon monoxide exposure can include everything from headaches, dizziness and drowsiness to nausea, vomiting or tightness across the chest. Severe carbon monoxide poisoning can cause neurological damage, coma and death. Recently, a worker in a New England warehouse was found unconscious and seizing, suffering from carbon monoxide poisoning. Several other workers at the site also became sick. All of the windows and doors were closed to conserve heat, there was no exhaust ventilation in the facility, and very high levels of carbon monoxide were measured at the site.

Sources of carbon monoxide can include anything that uses combustion to operate, such as gas generators, power tools, compressors, pumps, welding equipment, space heaters and furnaces.

To reduce the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning in the workplace, employers should install an effective ventilation system, avoid the use of fuel-burning equipment in enclosed or partially-enclosed spaces, use carbon monoxide detectors in areas where the hazard is a concern and take other precautions outlined in OSHA's Carbon Monoxide Fact Sheet at http://www.osha.gov/OshDoc/data_General_Facts/carbonmonoxide-factsheet.pdf. For additional information on carbon monoxide poisoning and preventing exposure in the workplace, see OSHA's Carbon Monoxide Poisoning Quick Card at http://www.osha.gov/OshDoc/data_Hurricane_Facts/carbon_monoxide.pdf.