

Walking on ice

Many employee injuries are caused by slips and falls on sidewalks, parking lots, roadways and other outdoor locations which are covered with ice. It often happens that we cannot completely get rid of this danger and so other means must be taken to deal with this hazard. Removing snow when possible and covering icy areas often with salt can help keep employees safe.

There are safety precautions that we can take to lessen the incidence and severity of injuries which occur from slips and falls. First, be alert to the hazards that ice presents. Realize how easy it is to slip and fall at any time. There is an art to falling without receiving an injury.

Try to use your arms and legs to hit the ice at the same time but before your trunk hits the ice. “Catching” yourself in this way helps to spread out the force of impact, so your back or tail bone doesn’t take the brunt of the injury.

Remember to tuck your chin down against your chest so that your head stays protected as much as possible. This position also helps keep your head from impacting the ice as much.

The kind of shoes you choose to wear during icy weather is very important. The sole of the shoe should be made of a slip-resistant material with minimal heels. Aggressive tread helps you keep your balance and gets a better grip on ice. Never wear shoes that are smooth-bottomed or that will not grip the icy ground on which you are walking.

Adjust the length of your stride so that your center of gravity is centered above your feet. For most of us, that means that we must take shorter steps while walking on ice. Also, keep your stride wider apart than you normally would. This helps maintain your balance too, even though it feels awkward.

Snow isn’t as slippery as ice, so you may choose to walk through the snow rather than the ice. However, snow that falls on top of ice is extremely hazardous and far more slippery than bare ice! Stay on top of the weather so you’ll be better able to choose a safe path. Be alert for “black” ice. It’s deceptive in that it appears to be simply a wet surface rather than an icy one.

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Walking on ice *cont.*

Wipe the snow from your shoes and pant legs before you enter a building. This helps to prevent snow from being tracked inside the building where it can melt and cause a slipping hazard.

As long as you remain alert and adjust your stride, wear appropriate shoes, and try to fall correctly you should be more prepared for walking on icy surfaces. Perhaps this winter there will be no broken bones!

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