

SafetyToolboxTalks

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Walking in Icy Conditions

This winter has been one of the worst in many years throughout a great portion of the United States. There has been near-record snow fall, ice and many other weather hazards even in areas that aren't used to seeing such weather conditions.

Snow is bad enough, but truly ice and icy conditions can be a far greater hazard to your health. Snow can easily be seen, removed and does have some traction. On the other hand, ice can be an unseen and dangerous condition not only in a vehicle, but especially on foot.

There is nothing worse than battling weather conditions and other traffic then to get to work, park your car and THEN take a tumble and hurt yourself just feet from the door. Falling injuries on ice in parking lots and sidewalks are more common than you would think. In many cases they lead to serious fractures especially in the arms as employees slip and try to break there fall as they go down.

Here are some tips to help you when conditions are icy:

Like many of us, if you are frustrated and tense after pulling into the parking lot after your commute because of the conditions and/or other drivers, take a moment and sit in the car with the heat on and settle down prior to getting out and walking to the door. When we are frustrated, we are much more likely to be rushed, not carefully paying attention as we walk from our car to the door. Additionally, with the stress and tension our muscles get tense and do not function as fluidly as needed when trying to walk on ice.

Take very small steps when you walk always sliding your feet across the pavement rather than using your typical stride.

If you have to walk up or down an incline, turn sideways and slide your feet apart and together in a sliding side-step motion.

Bend your knees just slightly as it will give you better balance while heading to the door.

Ensure your feet are slightly apart to give you better balance.

Carry something (lunchbox, etc) in your dominant hand while you are walking. This will often help to ensure that if you do fall . . . you don't use and perhaps break your fall (and your hand/wrist/arm) using your dominant hand.

And of course, look at the ground while you are walking. All too often when end up slipping on ice that we could see had we been looking for it.