

Winter Hazards and Workplace Safety

Winter is here again in Illinois. The season of ice and snow can translate to hazards, and ultimately accidents. Here are some tips to help you and your co-workers stay safe this season.

Slips and Falls – Avoid Slip-Ups

Wet or snowy days can create slick floors at the workplace. Slips and falls are a leading cause of workplace injuries, and so it's important to take precautions to keep everyone safe and healthy.

Make sure you wear proper footwear (shoes and boots). Be aware of wet areas on the floor. Clean up the hazard, place cones or hazard signs nearby, or call the Facilities Office to have the hazard addressed. People can walk on extremely slippery surfaces by modifying their speed and stride, provided they know about the dangerous condition. It's the lack of warning that can cause problems. An unexpected shift from a smooth to a slick surface heightens the likelihood of a slip or fall.

Experts say the single most important steps to take in preventing slips and falls are to keep floors clean and dry, and to pay attention as you walk. Keep all areas free of obstructions (such as umbrellas and boots). Look ahead and anticipate wet or icy conditions.

Winter Driving

Winter in Illinois means everything from fog, rain, ice, snow, slippery roads, and poor visibility. Cold, wet weather can produce dangerous conditions for vehicle operators, especially if driving a vehicle with which you are not familiar. You can take some simple precautions to minimize the risk of accidents and injuries.

- Before you get into a vehicle, take a little extra time to make sure everything in and about the vehicle is in good condition and operating correctly. This includes lights, mirrors, brakes, windshield wipers, and defrosters.
- Condensation and frost can greatly impair visibility. If a vehicle is kept outdoors, especially overnight, condensation or frost may develop on the windows. Keep a towel handy to wipe-off condensation, and a scraper to remove any frost build up. Also, check for and remove ice or snow build-up on headlights and tail lights, which can make it hard for other drivers to see your vehicle.
- Ensure the tires have good tread and adequate pressure and there is more than a quarter tank of gas; have emergency equipment in the vehicle, including a flashlight, fire extinguisher, flares, blankets, food and water, and chains where applicable.
- Remember also to reduce driving speed on wet, snowy, or icy roads and be especially alert for pedestrians and animals. Reduced speeds will make your driving experience easier and safer.

Preventive maintenance and extra caution can be important factors in accident prevention.

Keep Safe This Winter

Keep in mind that as temperatures fall and precipitation increases, certain workplace injuries tend to rise. Be aware of your surroundings and learn hazard-prevention tactics to remain safe on the job this winter.