

Don't Let Winter Drive Up Your Accident Rate

Whether it's 3.6 inches of snow in Las Vegas or snow and ice storms in Wyoming, we've already seen our fair share of dangerous weather this winter. Here are some tips for keeping your workers safe in winter weather, particularly when on the road.

Snow and ice, plus frequent strong winds and even occasional hail storms, make winter driving not only difficult but also dangerous, causing numerous car pileups and quite a few deaths. Even in milder winters, it's very important to avoid hazards by following safe driving rules.

- Be sure your vehicle is in good condition, with functioning brakes, lights, radiator, and windshield wipers.
- Keep snow and ice cleared off the car, including head- and taillights, mirrors, windows, and license plates—and stop when necessary to clear again.
- Wear your seat belt.
- Whenever possible, drive on interstate and one-way roads because head-on collisions are among the greatest killers on wet or icy roads.
- Drive at an appropriate steady pace, and keep an extra distance between you and the car ahead.
- Turn on your lights in order to see and be seen.
- Do not slam on the brakes; the wheels could lock and cause your car to slide.
- If it does start to slide, take your foot off the gas and the brake, then turn your wheels in the direction of the slide.

Rain can be a hazard, too, as it can make the road very slippery. You want to avoid hydroplaning, which can occur when you go fast enough for your tires to float on the water, not rest on the road surface. Speeds of 50 mph or more increase the risk of hydroplaning, so slow down when the roads are wet. Avoid puddles if you can, because they may hide damaging potholes. When you know you're going to be driving in snow, it would be wise to keep the following items in your car:

- A shovel to make a path in front of and behind the wheels
- A bag of sand to put over those paths
- Strips of carpet or roof shingles to be placed in front of or in back of the tires to help give them traction.

You'll want to be careful even walking in rain and snow, because you could easily slip or fall.

Create Slip-Free Zones

We suggest you create slip-free zones both inside and outside your workplace. Inside, remind employees to clean up spills, drips and leaks immediately (even a little coffee spill on the floor can cause a slip, a fall, and an injury). Make sure maintenance personnel and other employees put up signs or barriers to warn people when floors are wet, slippery, or otherwise hazardous.

And be sure somebody is assigned to put down mats on wet days near entryways to help keep floors dry.

Outside, see to it that slippery spots are sanded or salted immediately. And encourage employees to wear sensible shoes with nonskid soles on bad-weather days. Also remind them to wipe their feet when they come in from outside. Another way to prevent slips is to teach employees to walk slowly, take small steps, and slide their feet on wet or slippery surfaces.

Winter weather is just one cause of slip-and-fall accidents, which are a major cause of injuries year-round.

Source: Daily Safety Daily Advisor