

# WINTER SAFETY: SLIPS, TRIPS, AND FALLS



## INTRODUCTION

In many parts of the country, when the air starts to chill and clouds start to gather, people begin to prepare for the oncoming of winter. When winter arrives, it is accompanied by sleet, hail, snow, rain, and ice. These weather conditions can cause people to either slip, trip, or fall. This lesson will cover injuries that may result from slipping, tripping, or falling, footwear that one should wear when outside, and tips on how to prevent slipping, tripping, or falling.

## INJURIES THAT MAY RESULT FROM SLIPPING, TRIPPING, OR FALLING

Slipping, tripping, or falling could result in one or more of the following injuries:

- Bruises
- Broken bones
- Back injuries
- Head injuries



## FOOTWEAR

One of the biggest things that people can do to prevent slips, trips, and falls in winter conditions is to wear proper footwear. Suitable winter footwear should have:

- Good traction
- Waterproof material for the sole
- Fabric that can increase the insulation of the shoe or boot to keep your feet warm and dry
- A comfortable fit
- A low heel

In addition to shoes and boots, you may also want to consider some winter footwear accessories such as:

- Over-shoes with good tread
- Removable ice cleats





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## TIPS TO PREVENT SLIPS, TRIPS, AND FALLS

When walking on wet, snowy, or icy surfaces, it is recommended that you:

- Assume that all outside surfaces will be slippery because of any unseen ice on top of walking surfaces. Unseen ice is often referred to as “black ice,” even if it is not colored black. This ice can occur after snow and ice have melted and refrozen at night or in colder temperatures.
- Give yourself extra time to get to your destination.
- Park vehicles in spaces where snow and ice have been cleared when possible.
- Maintain three points of contact when entering or exiting vehicles.
- Step down instead of out when exiting vehicles.
- Keep as flat-footed as possible.
- Walk on designated walking paths. Snow-covered areas can hide ice and other obstacles that could cause you to fall. Additionally, it is recommended that you walk on sites that have been salted or otherwise treated for ice.
- Use handrails where they are provided. Where possible, maintain three points of contact with railings. If railings are unavailable, try to use other stationary objects to help you stay balanced.
- Keep your hands free and out of pockets. Use your hands to help you maintain balance as you walk.
- Take smaller steps than then you would in dry conditions. If you walk on top of the ice, angle your feet, they should be pointed outward and take small, shuffling steps. A common analogy for this type of walking is to think of yourself walking like a penguin.
- Take your time and walk slow. Walking fast or running could cause you to slip, trip, or fall.
- Make sure that you are not distracted by cell phones or oversized loads. Keep your mind focused on your current task of walking.
- If you have access and permission to do so, it is recommended that you salt, sand, or use other ice control methods on icy areas when you see them.
- When entering buildings, you should stomp or otherwise remove any excess snow from the bottom of your shoes. Excess snow tracked through a warm building will melt and cause indoor surfaces to become slippery. If you see water or melted snow on the floor, please clean it up to help prevent others from slipping, tripping, or falling.
- Report unsafe walking conditions to your supervisors. Additionally, you should report all slipping, tripping, and falling incidents to your supervisor.

## Falling

If you do find yourself falling, it is recommended that you do the following to help minimize your chances of an injury occurring:

- Avoid using your arms to catch yourself. Trying to catch yourself with your arms could result in injuries to your hands and wrist.
- Try to roll with the fall by landing on your thighs, buttocks, or shoulders and rolling. Rolling can help distribute the force of the fall throughout your entire body instead of one area.
- Additionally, try to roll backward and tucking your head and shoulders in so your head does not get slammed into the ground.
- If you are falling while carrying something, it is recommended that you try to land on what you are carrying to help break the fall. If you do not want to land on the items, toss them away.

## CONCLUSION

To conclude, slips, trips, and falls are common workplace accidents that can be avoided by practicing vigilance and taking your time. In winter, these types of accidents increase because of weather conditions. To help minimize your chances of getting hurt, you should take your time, walk slowly while on slippery surfaces, and report all unsafe walking conditions to your supervisor.

Questions? Call 1-800-734-3574

