

TOOLBOX TALK #51

WINTER WORKPLACE SAFETY TIPS

Working during winter feels more like survival of the fittest than an every day challenge. The risks are tenfold for employees who have to work and drive outdoors. Here are nine winter safety tips that should keep you safe during this trying season:



1. **Bring out those hands.** Hold it! Don't remove those gloves or mittens yet. I mean, just think twice before walking outside with your hands in your pockets. Why? Keeping your hands in your pockets increases the risk of you falling or completely losing your balance in case you slip while walking on ice or snow.
2. **Mittens vs. gloves.** Gloves sure look fashionable but donning mittens can actually save your life. With your fingers touching each other inside mittens, they generate more body heat than when they're inside gloves.
3. **Warm up before shoveling.** Before you get rid of all the snow and ice at your workplace, do some stretching exercises first. You can also march in place or walk for a couple of minutes. With your muscles all warm, not only will you work more efficiently, you also reduce the risk of injuring yourself.
4. **Forget coffee and cigarettes.** Before shoveling or doing any strenuous work, avoid caffeine and nicotine. They increase your heart rate and may cause your blood vessels to constrict.
5. **Rock salt + kitty litter = safer walkways.** Have some rock salt and kitty litter on hand. Rock salt helps to melt the ice on slippery surfaces. Kitty litter can add to traction.
6. **Tin can + matches + candle + paper cup + snow = drinking water.** Yes, you read that equation right. Before going on the road, you better prepare a tin can, candle, paper cup and some matches. Should you get stuck in the middle of the road and run short on water, you can always melt some snow with the supplies above as part of your emergency kit.
7. **Warm up before driving off.** While it pays to do some stretching exercises before delivering goods or driving to work, you should warm up your vehicle too. This helps reduce the moisture condensation on the inside of your car windows. Remember, though, not to warm up your vehicle in a closed garage.
8. **Six inches equals danger.** Be wary of floods. Be doubly cautious of running water that is six inches deep or more, or you run the risk of getting swept off your feet.
9. **Report those damaged lines.** And finally, after a winter storm, immediately report any downed power lines or broken gas lines in your area or workplace.