

SAFE WINTER WALKING

November 2015



Slips, trips and falls are the second most common cause of unintentional death from injuries in the U.S. each year, second only to traffic deaths. Even when tumbles aren't fatal, painful and sometimes life-changing injuries can result from slips, trips, and falls. The good news is many of these injuries are preventable by using simple safety precautions.

Transition Risks: Use special care when entering and exiting buildings or vehicles; use handrails or the vehicle for support as you transition from one position to the next.

Parking Lots: Statistics show that almost 80 percent of slips and falls due to snow and ice occur in parking lots and on sidewalks, with more than 50 percent occurring between 6 a.m. and noon. Take special caution while in parking lots in the morning.

North-Facing Entrances: When possible, avoid north-facing entrances to buildings. Unless properly cleared, these areas tend to remain icy and slippery.

Appropriate Footwear: Appropriate footwear in inclement weather is a must. Rubber and neoprene composite boots and shoes will give more traction than leather or plastic. Consider carrying your dress shoes rather than wearing them into work.

When You Can't Avoid Walking on Slick Surfaces, Walk Like A Penguin: If you must walk on a slippery surface, slow down, take small steps, and keep your hands free for balance. Bend your knees slightly and walk flat-footed with your center of gravity directly over your feet as much as possible. Bending slightly forward may help protect your head if your feet do slip out from under you.

Be Smart: Carrying items can impair your balance. Don't try to carry more than you can easily manage and still maintain balance. Slow down and watch for hazards. Use handrails where available. If possible, do not carry children while walking on slippery ground because a fall could put the child's safety in serious jeopardy.

Indoor Risks: Wet surfaces are a huge risk. When entering buildings, use door mats to help remove snow and water from footwear and prevent creating wet, slippery conditions indoors. Mop and dry spills immediately. Place caution signage in problem areas until dry.

**Information compiled from various sources by the
IDPH Occupational Health & Safety Surveillance Program
800-972-2026**

For more information about winter safety including a Safe Winter Walking poster, visit www.ehs.iastate.edu/news/walk-safe-winter.

