

Safety Newsletter

A quarterly publication for injury and illness prevention

Winter 2024

Winter Wellness Tips



There are several ways you can boost your immune system and avoid getting sick this winter.

- ✓ **Limit the spread of germs**
Remember to cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze. If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve or elbow. Wash your hands regularly using soap and warm water and scrub for at least 20 seconds. If you can't wash your hands, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- ✓ **Stay hydrated**
Drinking enough water each day boosts your immune system and helps you fight viruses. Aim to drink enough water to equal two-thirds of your body weight in ounces every day.
- ✓ **Up your vitamin D intake**
Low vitamin D levels can make you susceptible to illnesses and negatively affect your mental health. Boost your levels by getting in the sunshine and eating foods high in vitamin D, like mushrooms and salmon.
- ✓ **Stay Rested**
A lack of sleep can lower your immune system. Maintaining a consistent sleep schedule and getting seven to nine hours of sleep per night lets your body recover and protect against sickness.

Keeping Employees Safe During Winter



Planning for harsh winter weather involves more than having a bag of rock salt in the closet and a poster in the cafeteria that says “Bundle Up.” Chances are many of the items that will help get you through the cold weather months are already onsite, but do not wait until the snow starts flying to review winter safety plans, remind employees of cold weather hazards and ensure the tools and equipment that will be needed are stocked and ready for use.

1. Recognize Winter Hazards

- ✓ For employees who will need to work outdoors, cold stress injuries such as hypothermia, frostbite, overexertion and dehydration are risks that cannot be overlooked.
- ✓ Take a trip around your campus (both inside and outside) to identify the winter hazards at your facility, which will determine what you need to plan for.

2. Have A Plan

- ✓ A winter safety plan, like other safety plans, will address each of the identified risks and the procedures that will be used to eliminate or minimize that risk. Be sure that plans are specific, listing who will perform an action and when it is to happen. For example, instead of just listing that snow is to be removed from the parking lot, specify that it will be removed by the maintenance staff at least a half hour before shifts begin and end.

Decoration Safety



- ✓ **Only use** decorations in their intended fashion and read all display instructions before use.
- ✓ **Do not** block fire alarms, emergency signs or exits with decorations.
- ✓ **Confine decorations** to suitable spaces such as bulletin boards. Covering windows and ceilings with additional decorations increases the amount of combustible material in the classroom and increases fire risks.
- ✓ **Never** hang decorations from light fixtures, sprinkler heads, vents or radiators.
- ✓ **Choose** decorations with flame resistant coatings.
- ✓ **Never** use candles or any other decorations with exposed heating elements.
- ✓ **Avoid** fake snow for winter holiday decorations because it may irritate the lungs when sprayed and could pose a toxic hazard.
- ✓ **Use only** shatterproof, unbreakable decorative items.
- ✓ **Avoid** candy-like decorations that may be a tempting treat for younger students.

The material in this newsletter should be part of your Injury & Illness Prevention Plan (IIPP).

(Keeping Employees Safe During Winter – continued)

3. Entrances

- ✓ Entrance mats are a common line of defense for collecting dirt, rain and snow as employees enter the building, but only if they are the right type and length to do the job well.

4. Sidewalks and Parking Lots

- ✓ Caring for sidewalks sometimes gets lumped into general parking lot care. However, many times the two surfaces are different. Parking lots are often asphalt or gravel and sidewalks are usually untreated cement or clay block. They are also handled differently when it snows. Parking lots are usually plowed, but sidewalks are shoveled or snow-blown. Icy spots in a parking lot might get a healthy dose of rock salt, but sidewalks are more commonly treated with a salt substitute or maybe an anti-slip aggregate. Recognizing these differences can help increase safety in both areas when snow or ice is in the forecast.
- ✓ Having a well-established plan for how to handle snow and ice in parking lots and on sidewalks is essential. Outdoor winter weather plans should include:
 - Names of personnel responsible for snow removal and phone numbers to reach them
 - A method for monitoring weather forecasts and a means of adjusting employee schedules and communicating those changes to them, if necessary
 - A time at which all snow that fell overnight will be removed (should be at least half an hour before shift changes)
 - A process stating what will be plowed/shoveled/cleared first, second, etc.
 - A list of tools available for snow removal, and their locations
 - Sufficient quantities of anti-slip and/or deicing agents
 - Strategies for inspecting outdoor areas and maintaining snow removal during long snow or ice events
 - Pre-printed signs, cones, barriers or other devices to identify hazardous areas that have not yet been cleared