

# WINTER *Safety*



From 2003 to 2006, more than one million occupational slip and fall accidents occurred in the US. Falls cause more lost time than any other class of occupational accidents and are the second leading cause of work-related deaths. The most disturbing aspect is nearly all of these accidents are preventable with minimal consideration and cost.

Throughout the Midwest, winter weather conditions pose a major threat to employee and customer safety. A major winter storm can clog roads, close schools, and turn sidewalks and parking lots into a premises liability headache. You may believe slips are completely unavoidable, but there are steps you can take to prevent serious winter-related accidents.

## Repair sidewalks

Before major winter storms begin, it's important to run a thorough check of your premises. All potholes, uneven sidewalks, and other obstacles should be corrected. Taking proactive preventative measures now can greatly decrease the likelihood of a major accident.

While monitoring sidewalks and parking lots, also check drains, low spots, and catch basins. Pooled water will turn into a slip-and-fall nightmare as soon as temperatures drop. Also check gutters for dripping, thawing, and ice formation. Walk through your entire facility after a heavy rain before the winter season and note all potential issues.

## Follow weather trends

Preparation is the only way to truly combat winter-related slip-and-fall accidents. Closely following weather reports will allow you to be one step ahead of any major weather system. Notify all employees and customers when a large snow storm or freeze is expected. Prepare accordingly by salting, shoveling, or deicing.

## Develop a snow removal plan

As soon as snow accumulates, it's important to have a well-developed plan to ensure proper shoveling and plowing. Contracting out your snow removal to a company with all the necessary equipment is ideal. This allows you and your employees to focus on more pressing issues and also removes the potential for a worker's compensation injury. You should obtain a signed written contract that ensures the contractor is insured and has clear guidelines for when to plow and shovel.

If you decide to service your own facility, be sure to use the proper tools. A new snow blower can save hours of work for you and your employees, not to mention unnecessary strain on the lower back. As with any motor-powered equipment, closely follow directions and recommended operating techniques. Have a set schedule for shoveling and plowing during storms.

| SUPPLY CHECKLIST |                         |
|------------------|-------------------------|
|                  | Salt                    |
|                  | Sand                    |
|                  | Shovels                 |
|                  | Snow Blower             |
|                  | Snow Plow               |
|                  | Warning Cones           |
|                  | Floor mats              |
|                  | Non-slip Floor Cleaners |

## Snow removal documentation

Make safety everyone's responsibility. Consistently document when, where, and how your sidewalks and parking lot have been serviced. This documentation can ensure consistency from storm to storm and prove to be a valuable resource in potential claims. [A sample Snow Removal Log has been included on the next page.]

