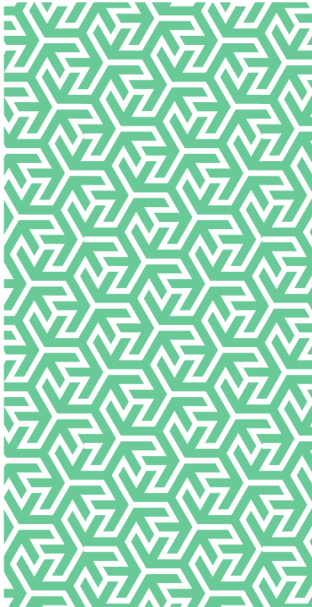




Risk control

Slips, Trips and Falls Toolkit: Winter Weather Management



In partnership with



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Introduction

Slips, trips and falls are the biggest cause of major injury and so it is important to do whatever possible to prevent them.

Slips and trips increase during the autumn and winter season for several reasons: there is less daylight, leaves can fall onto paths and become wet and slippery and cold weather can cause ice and snow to build up on paths and pavements.

This brief guide, as part of our overall Slips, Trips and Falls Toolkit; sets out recommendations for dealing with snow and ice and is designed to help minimise the risk of slip accidents in these adverse weather conditions.

Assess the Risk and Identify Areas of Concern

Develop a plan so that, when snow or ice does arrive, preparations have been made to respond and deal with it effectively.

Walk around the workplace (ideally just before or around opening time) and consider the routes people tend to take and try to identify areas where snow or ice could be a significant problem, e.g. at entrances, in car parks, on sloped surfaces, or in areas that remain in shadow or that are regularly wet.

Also, look out for any blocked drains or leaking gutters that could increase the risk of ice formation. Encourage the workforce to be mindful and report such issues, as they observe them.

Plan

Devise an action plan to rectify issues and develop a strategy for dealing with snow and ice. Consider how feasible and important it is to maintain safe access to the full site. It may be more appropriate to concentrate on critical areas and warn people that other areas have not been treated.

Consider closing car parks or entrances that are in shade or on a slope if there are suitable and more easily managed alternatives available.

Develop a Strategy

Develop a strategy for dealing with snow and ice.

Put a procedure in place to prevent an icy surface forming and/or keep pedestrians off slippery surfaces. To keep surfaces slip resistant and to restrict access

to untreated areas, consider what to do; how to do it; who should do it; and when to do it. Snow clearance and gritting with rock salt (plain and treated) is the most common method used to maintain slip resistance in wintery conditions. Consider carefully how to restrict access.

Advice regarding snow clearance, gritting and restricting access is provided below:

Prepare

Consider erecting suitable canopies over walkways and providing handrails on ramps. Ensure the correct materials are available, equipment and manpower in place to implement your snow and ice strategy.

It is recommended that plans are communicated to staff before the event to raise their awareness of the risks and the actions that they should take, as well as to provide them an opportunity to raise their views and/or concerns.

Snow Clearance

When clearing snow, think about where to stockpile it. Avoid blocking fire escapes or covering drains and try to position it so that when it melts, the water drains away from walkways in case it refreezes.

Use the appropriate tools for the job (for example, snow shovels, ploughs and/or blowers) and appropriate manual handling techniques.

Gritting

Gritting should be carried out whenever frost, ice or snow is forecast or when walkways are likely to be damp or wet and the floor temperatures are at, or below freezing.

Salt needs enough time to dissolve into the moisture on the floor; it is best applied in the evening before the frost settles and/or early in the morning before employees arrive. Salt can be washed away by heavy rain; it may need to be reapplied following rainfall.

Compacted snow, which turns to ice, is difficult to treat effectively with grit alone. Ideally, snow should be cleared before it becomes compacted. Gritting machines may be required for large areas, whereas grit bins and shovels may suffice in smaller areas.

Restricting Access

If it is, intended to leave some areas untreated or to close part of the site, think about how to do this and how to make staff aware of the safe routes they can take.

Signs and cordons are often useful. Whenever possible, staff should be made aware of any potential restrictions prior to the event and made aware of the 'priority routes' that are to be kept open. Physical barriers are significantly better than signs at preventing access to areas.

Precautions

Monitor the weather forecast to know when to expect snow and ice. Warn staff the day before and initiate your snow and ice strategy before it arrives.

Staff involved in clearing snow and applying grit should wear warm clothing and slip resistant footwear. Review if any staff need any additional or refresher manual handling training.

Extra matting may be required at entrances to prevent moisture and salt residue being trafficked into buildings, as this can increase slip risk indoors. Any snow that gets walked in tends to spread beyond the entrance as it doesn't easily come off shoes and clothing. Some 'Ice Melt' treatments can leave an oily residue if they are walked into the building. Additional cleaning may also be required indoors. Cleaning should focus on keeping floors dry where possible.

Raise awareness of the risks and remind staff that surfaces may still be slippery, even if they have been treated. Also try to discourage inappropriate footwear and rushing.

Risk Management Partners and Gallagher Bassett would like to thank QBE European Operations for the material used to shape this toolkit segment.

Further information

For access to further RMP Resources you may find helpful in reducing your organisation's cost of risk, please access the RMP Resources or RMP Articles pages on our website. To join the debate follow us on our LinkedIn page.

Get in touch

For more information, please contact your broker, RMP risk control consultant or account director.

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