



Winter Weather Preparedness Guidebook

One way to help keep employees safe is by being prepared for the weather — sometimes extreme — that winter can bring, and being ready to alert employees to use caution.

Winter weather can change suddenly and freezing rain and snow can quickly turn sidewalks and parking lots into dangerous sheets of black ice. These weather changes may contribute to serious slip and fall injuries in parking lots, on sidewalks and at building entrances. The type of weather alert systems a company has in place to monitor changing conditions and promptly alert employees can play a big role in reducing these injuries throughout the winter season.

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The Importance of Employee Alerts

Written Program and Procedures

Every company should have a written program that outlines the procedures in place for monitoring changes to winter weather conditions, as well as the process of communicating severe weather advisories and alerts to employees. The program should include important information covering:

- The types of alert systems used
- Employee responsibilities
- Communication and notification systems

Designate Employee(s) to Monitor Severe Winter Weather

Within the written program, management needs to designate responsibility for monitoring weather to a specific individual, department or team. The team may include administrative staff, building facilities personnel, maintenance employees or safety/security, depending on the staffing resources of your organization.

The team should be thoroughly trained on the company's

- Facility closing procedures and call in phone numbers
- Information technology systems used

In the weeks leading up to the winter season, all employees should receive an update on the company program to remind them of the procedures that have been established. You can also refer to our "Snow and Ice Removal Guidebook" for additional information.

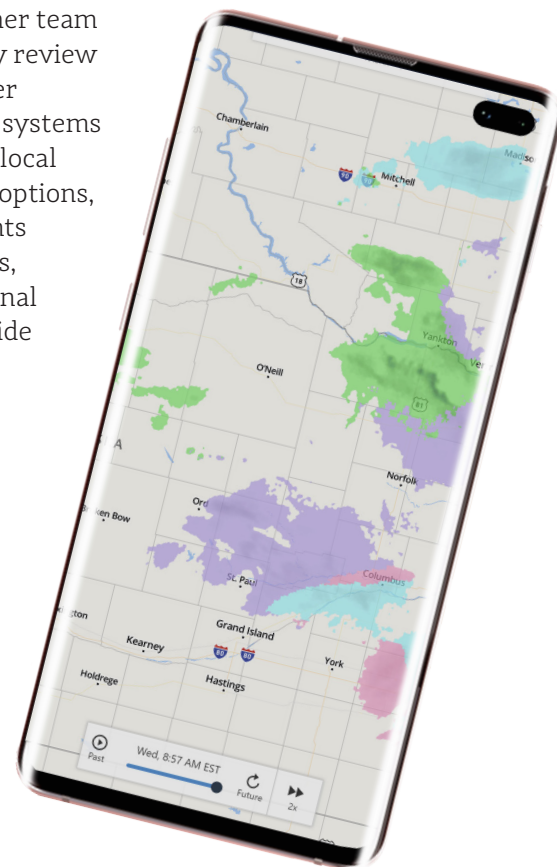
Winter Weather Advisory and Alert Systems

One of the most important aspects to a winter slip and fall prevention program is the way an organization stays alert to changing weather conditions. Some of the most common sources of weather notification come through various channels of communication including:

- Live television and radio
- Weather radios
- Computer desktop websites and widgets
- Smartphone applications

Using Doppler radar technology, local TV and radio stations provide some of the most timely information about approaching weather systems that could generate freezing rain or high levels of snow accumulation. Weather radios with SAME technology can be programmed to provide weather advisories and alerts specific to certain geographic areas.

Your winter weather team should periodically review the type of weather advisory and alert systems available for their local area. Evaluate the options, make improvements to existing systems, and choose additional systems that provide the best weather information and alerts for the local area.



Communicating Severe Winter Weather Advisories to Employees

Once severe winter weather conditions have been identified, employees need to quickly be notified that dangerous slip and fall conditions may exist and that proper precautions need to be taken to prevent injury. Communication systems need to properly alert employees that are coming onto the premises, leaving the building, or traveling on business by vehicle.

Building and grounds personnel should immediately be contacted to perform additional surface treatments and salting. To create additional awareness to employees, temporary warning signage or orange safety cones can be placed near building entrances/exits, along walkways/steps and in parking lot entrances/exits where needed. If contractors are used for snow and ice removal at your company, ask the contractor how they stay informed about changing weather conditions. The program should state the name and phone number of the contractor as

well as when it is appropriate to contact them.

Your team should work with your IT and facilities personnel to review the various ways that employees can be notified of winter weather advisories, alerts and slippery conditions in outdoor parking lots, sidewalks and steps. These may include:

- Email blasts to desktop computers and smartphones
- Personal address systems
- Electronic monitors in hallways and entrances
- Company Intranet and website postings
- Placing temporary “Slip and Fall Hazard” warning signs or orange safety cones along building exits and walkways to alert employees leaving the property.
- Placing temporary “Slip and Fall Hazard” warning signs at the entrances to parking lots to alert employees and visitors coming onto the property.

Facility Closings

You should establish procedures for closing company buildings and facilities since office closings help protect employees from slip and fall injuries, as well as the

exposures associated with driving during adverse weather.

Winter Weather Alert Resources:

Live Local Television and Radio Stations — Monitor your local TV and radio stations for winter weather alerts, notifications and periodic updates.

Computer Desktop Websites and Widgets — Websites and computer widgets are widely available and allow users to monitor current weather conditions, view animated radar images and receive severe weather alerts.

- <http://www.weather.com/>
- <http://www.accuweather.com/>
- <http://www.weather.com/mobile/>

Smartphone Apps — Anyone with a smartphone now has access to a wide-variety of apps that provide weather alerts. These apps include valuable information on current weather conditions, the forecast and National Weather Service (NWS) alerts for specific locations. Check with your cellular phone service provider for suggestions on available applications, pricing and downloading instructions.

- <http://weather.weatherbug.com/>
- <http://www.weathereyeonline.com/>

General weather alert resources:

National Weather Service — Provides weather and climate forecasts and warnings through a collection of national and regional centers as well as 122 local weather forecast offices. <http://weather.gov/>

Emergency Alert System — A national public warning system that requires the President have communications capabilities to address the American public during a national emergency. <http://www.fcc.gov/guides/emergency-alert-system-eas>



Winter Weather Alert Checklist

This checklist is intended to help management review its current Winter Weather Alert and Employee Communication System. The checklist can be used as a starting point for reviewing your company's current plan and to discuss ideas for where improvements can be made in the program to reduce slip and fall injuries this winter.

Once severe winter weather conditions have been identified, employees need to be quickly notified that dangerous slip and fall conditions may exist and that proper precautions need to be taken to prevent injury. Your communication systems need to properly alert employees that are coming onto the premises, leaving the building or traveling on business by vehicle.

Keep in mind when researching, downloading or installing various types of software, computer applications or alert systems, management should work closely with their IT department to leverage technical expertise and ensure applications are compatible with existing systems.

Program Component	Yes or No	
	Yes	No
A written Winter Weather Alert and Employee Communications plan or policy is in place.		
A winter weather advisory team and/or employee(s) have been designated to monitor winter weather conditions and communicate alerts when necessary.		
The responsibilities of the team have been clearly documented within the plan.		
A recent meeting or training has been completed with the team to review the written plan, make suggestions for improvement and review responsibilities. Date of meeting _____.		
The contents of the program have recently been communicated to all employees to remind them of the procedures in place.		
Live radio station broadcasts are monitored during periods of winter weather.		
Team members have researched and selected computer desktop websites, widgets, screen savers and weather links, which are monitored for changing weather conditions.		
Email alerts have been established (refer to the Accident Fund resource document on computer desktop software, widgets, screen savers and web links for more information).		
Team members have researched and selected smartphone applications which can be monitored by employees (refer to the United Heartland resource document on Smart Phone applications for more information).		
Employee communication systems related to winter weather advisories and alerts have recently been evaluated and updated.		
IT has been engaged to review the various ways that employees can be notified of winter weather advisories, alerts and slippery walking conditions. These may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Email blasts to their desktop computers & smartphones • Announcements over a public address system • Electronic monitors in hallways & entrances • Company Intranet and website postings 		
Building and grounds, facilities, or maintenance personnel have been engaged to verify that the alert system will provide communication to appropriate personnel to implement corrective actions. This may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Placing temporary “Slip and Fall Hazard” warning signs or orange safety cones along building exits and walkways to alert employees leaving the property. • Placing temporary “Slip and Fall Hazard” warning signs at the entrances to parking lots to alert employees coming onto the property. 		
Facility closing procedures related to severe winter weather conditions have been developed. These systems may include such things as automatic notification systems to employee homes, dedicated phone numbers employees may call to learn of possible closings, etc.		
Procedures are in place to contact employees who work offsite, such as company truck drivers, employees traveling to customers, etc		

Driving in Inclement Weather

No one likes to get stuck in a snow or ice storm while driving. But for some employees, they're on the road every day for company purposes. Others have smaller exposures to the dangers of being on the road, but either way, if you or your employees are driving in inclement weather, you need to be prepared. Here are helpful safety suggestions to think about for winter driving, some of which are also included on the Winter Vehicle Survival Checklist:

Pre-Season Warm Up

- Get your vehicle serviced according to suggestions in your owner's manual.
 - Have your local mechanic or repair shop thoroughly check for any leaks, bad hoses, depleted oil levels or other items, and if there are problems, make the needed replacements or repairs.
- Complete necessary tune-ups.
 - Inspect your tires — if they're worn or show signs of deterioration, replace them before the snow flies. During this service, have all lights (headlights, high beams, tail lights, parking lights, turn signals and flashers) inspected. The old adage "seen and be seen" applies more than ever when it comes to winter driving.
- Check your battery. Your mechanic can check for sufficient voltage and while doing so, inspect the charging system and belts. If you need a full battery replacement, make sure to get one sufficient for the make and model of your vehicle.
- Inspect your coolant system and consider purchasing an antifreeze/coolant tester, which you can get for as little as \$4 at many auto parts or hardware stores. This can be important because while a 50/50 mix of coolant and water will work for most regions of the country, you should always verify with a tester.

In-Season Readiness

Ideally, if inclement weather is frightful and/or if road conditions deteriorate, the safest practice is to pull off the road and not drive until conditions improve. However, if you have to drive in wintry conditions, the following practices are recommended:

- See and be seen — adequately clean the snow and ice off your vehicle. Be careful when doing so, as many slip and fall injuries can occur because the ground may get ice- and snow-covered simply from what you're cleaning off your vehicle.
- Windshield washer fluid is a key item in the winter

months. Completely fill your reservoir before the first snow hits and keep it topped off.

- Good windshield wipers are equally important as having fluid to clean your windshield. 90% of all driving decisions are based on an unobstructed view of the road, which means good visibility is absolutely essential — especially during inclement weather when vision may be obscured by water, road splashes, sleet or snow on the windshield.
- Inspect your tires on a frequent basis to include air pressure based on the tire manufacturer's suggestion.

Practice defensive driving.

During inclement weather, defensive driving is critical. One overlooked aspect of this is planning and knowing your travel route. Check the weather, road conditions and traffic, plan to leave early to take the stress out of your drive and make sure you have plenty of gasoline. If you get stuck in a traffic jam or snow storm, you may need more fuel to get home or keep warm. Here are a few other defensive driving tips:

- The first and easiest defensive driving suggestion for inclement weather is don't drive if you don't have to.
- Slow down — reducing your speed by a third or half of the posted limit may save your life.
- Keep a safe distance from the vehicle in front of you. On a clear sunny day, it's recommended to keep a

four-second gap between you and the vehicle in front of you. In poor weather, add several seconds onto that figure.

- Be cautious of black ice — a thin layer of water that freezes clear, making the road look wet.
- When visibility is limited, follow the edge of the right lane as your guide.
- Signal your intentions at all times, as vehicles following you will need to know when you're turning.
- Listen to the radio — the National Weather Service will send a public alert notice to inform you of hazardous conditions.

Stuck in the Snow

First and foremost, if you get stuck in the snow, be sure to keep your vehicle's exhaust pipe clear of snow accumulation to avoid carbon monoxide poisoning. Run your vehicle in the open with windows slightly down and just long enough to keep you warm.

Remember, it's important to stay with your vehicle and not overexert yourself. Put bright identification markers (signs, flags, rags, etc.) on the antenna or windows and keep the dome light on to help you be seen.

It's also important to stock your vehicle with extra supplies in case you are stuck for longer periods of time. This list can include, but isn't limited to:

- Shovel
- Ice scrapers/brushes
- Sand
- Jumper cables
- Flashlight with extra batteries
- Non-perishable food
- Blankets
- A change of clothes
- Matches/candles
- First aid kit
- Pocket knife
- Winter hat, coat, gloves and boots
- Brightly colored signs or flags

Informing Employees about Driving in Inclement Weather

Ideally, everyone needs to take personal responsibility for safe driving any time of the year. But to help inform employees who may be driving about approaching inclement weather, here are a few ideas:

- Remind them to have two different routes set up in case the primary route is dangerous or closed.

- Utilize alternate communication systems —semi-trucks and trucking companies can use two-way radios and electronic in-cab messaging devices.
- Ask employees to tune into AM/FM radio stations, which have storm alert updates on school and road closings.



Pre-Winter Vehicle Inspection

- Have your oil changed regularly and confirm that each of the following items are in order:
- Tire pressure: Check and fill tires at every other fuel fill up — refer to the proper pressure reading on the sidewall of the tire or consult your vehicle's owner's manual
- Tire tread: Use the "penny test" — with Lincoln's head upside-down, place a penny in the groove of the tread. If you can see Lincoln's head, the tire needs to be replaced <http://www.safetires.org/>
- Antifreeze: Check and fill as needed — use an antifreeze/coolant tester, which you can purchase for as little as \$4 at many auto parts and hardware stores
- Oil level: Check and fill as needed at every other fuel fill up
- Brake system: Look for signs to replace, such as if pedal soft or if you're stopping unevenly or pulling to one side
- Headlights and high beams working
- Tail lights working
- Brake lights working
- Turn signals working
- Emergency flashers working
- Replace windshield wiper blades every six to 12 months
- Windshield wiper fluid rated for cold temps: Check and fill as needed; a good idea is to keep a spare gallon of fluid in your trunk at all times

Daily Winter Vehicle Safety

Things you can do yourself to stay safer once you hit the road:

- Cell phone charged, with water and medicine on hand in vehicle for long trips or when driving in less-populated rural areas. Note that Accident Fund doesn't endorse cell phone use when driving; however, one is critical to have on hand in case of emergency.
- Let your car warm up
- Make sure all lights work and are clear of ice and/or snow
- Clean ice and snow off your wiper blades

