

Winter Construction Site Hazards & How to Prevent Them - Falls on Icy Surfaces

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Cold Fact: Slips, trips, and falls caused 229,190 non-fatal workplace injuries and 699 fatal work injuries in 2013. (Bureau of Labor Statistics)

Falls are among the most common construction site accidents. If you add snow and ice into the mix, the hazard increases significantly. Falls can cause fractures, head injuries, traumatic brain injuries (TBI), back and spinal cord injuries, and more.

Ice, melted snow, and general wetness all greatly increase the risk of slip and fall accidents on the construction site. Site Superintendents, managers, and crew leads will have to survey for slipping hazards and address the risk accordingly. They may need to use sand for traction, de-icing agents, or other means along with regular cleanups to address the risks.

Fall injuries can be prevented by:

- Dress appropriately. Encouraging workers to wear insulated and water-resistant boots with good rubber treads.
- Using safety lines for any work at a height above the ground.
- Be cautious and allow for extra time. Encourage workers to take short steps and walk at a slower pace on icy or snow-covered surfaces so they can react quickly to a change in traction.

Immediate action steps when a fall occurs:

- Don't get up right away or let anyone help you up immediately; this avoids the potential of causing further injury. Take your time, lie there for a moment, and assess how you are feeling.
 - After assessing your injury status, if you can get up, roll to one side. Bend your knees toward you, push up with your arms and then use your legs to stand up the rest of the way.
 - If someone assists you to your feet, ensure that he or she doesn't get hurt, too.
 - Report incident to your crew lead, site superintendent, and/or direct supervisor to complete a First Report of Injury form.
 - If the fall has led to an emergency, call 911 or emergency medical help immediately.
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