

Basic Tips to Reduce Snow Removal Injuries

Clearing snow and ice from all pathways – not just along sidewalks, but also parking lots and curb ramps – is an essential part of keeping our clubs safe and accessible during the winter. There are groups of individuals, including employees and guests to our clubs, who rely on sidewalks and crosswalks to be mobile, including people with certain disabilities and seniors. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires maintaining ADA-compliant access to pathways year-round, which includes removing snow and ice.

The responsibility for removing snow safely ultimately comes down to your employees. It is important to discuss safety information and ideas with your employees on removing snow safely. Whether the employee manually shovels the snow and/or uses specialized equipment, education on proper technique is paramount to a safe operation.

Employees that manually shovel snow could experience cold exposure, fatigue, muscular strains and more serious injury, particularly to the lower back. Preventing back injuries is a major workplace safety challenge. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), more than one million workers suffer back injuries each year, and back injuries account for one of every five workplace injuries or illnesses.

Those that operate equipment such as snow throwers, plow-trucks or other specialized equipment are also exposed to hazards, including strains and sprains, caught in or between moving parts, or vehicular accidents. The same above-mentioned cold exposures apply to anyone working outside.

Below, are outlined some safety tips to provide guidance on snow removal...

Manual Shoveling

- Clear snow early and often. This will lower your chances of having to move packed, heavy snow.
- Try to push snow instead of lifting it. If you must lift, bend your knees and keep your back straight. Don't bend at the waist.
- Avoid throwing snow over your shoulder or to the side, which can stress your back.
- Take plenty of breaks and drink lots of water.



Snowblower Safety

- Avoid wearing loose clothing. Loose pants, jackets and scarves can easily become tangled in the moving parts of a snow blower.
- Wear sturdy footwear with good traction. Appropriate footwear will help to prevent slip and fall injuries. Consider using shoe or boot grippers, such as ICETrekkers. These are also referred to as ice cleats or spikes; no matter what you call them, they will reduce the risk of a slip and fall.
- Stay focused. Pay close attention to the task at hand and refrain from the use of medication, drugs or alcohol. Be on the lookout for pedestrians moving around you.
- Start the machine outside. Do not start your snowblower in a garage. Gas-powered snowblowers produce dangerous carbon monoxide.
- Protect your ears. Wear ear plugs or other hearing protection. Most gas-powered snowblowers are loud and can cause hearing damage.
- Think about where the snow is blowing. Never direct the discharge chute toward people, traffic, or areas where damage can occur.
- Pace yourself. Although snowblowers are safer and faster than shoveling, you should still take rest breaks.



Plow Truck Operation

- Dress for Safety. Stay safe even when you aren't behind the wheel with warm clothing, slip-resistant footwear and a reflective safety vest.
- Have Three Points of Contact. Climbing in and out of the cab can be dangerous, especially when surrounded by snow and ice. To help prevent falls, make sure you have three points of contact (either two hands and one foot, or two feet and one hand) with the vehicle at all times.
- Wear a Seatbelt. If your plow hits a hidden obstruction, the vehicle may stop suddenly. Make sure you stay in the driver's seat by always wearing a seatbelt.
- Keep a Clear View. Prior to plowing, check that vehicle lights are sufficient, in working order and adjusted properly to provide a clear view. Additionally, you should stop periodically to clear ice and snow from your windows and lights to make sure you can see and be seen. Never plow with your head out the window; hidden objects could cause head and neck injuries.
- Adjust for Other Surfaces. If you're plowing dirt or gravel surfaces, lower the plow shoes. This will raise the blade, so the surface isn't scraped away.
- Keep Snow Away From Buildings. When plowing close to a building, always push or pull the snow away from the building.
- Know The Area. Visit parking lots and other areas during warm season and note obstructions, or other hazardous conditions.



This update is brought to you by the Fund's third party administrator

Wayne Flees | Risk Services Consultant | Sedgwick | Howell, MI

CELL 248.214.5822 | EMAIL wayne.flees@sedgwick.com

www.sedgwick.com | Caring counts®

