

Trade Release



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OSHA aims to protect workers during winter storms

WASHINGTON -- The U.S. Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has created a web page to help protect workers from hazards they may face during winter storm response and recovery operations.

The Web page provides guidance on how employers and workers involved in cleanup and recovery operations can recognize snow storm-related hazards and the necessary steps that employers must take to keep workers safe while working in these conditions. The page includes guidance for workers clearing heavy snow in front of workplaces and from rooftops, workers encountering downed power lines or traveling on icy roads, and utility workers restoring power after winter storms.

Hazards associated with working in winter storms include:

- being struck by falling objects such as icicles, tree limbs, and utility poles
- driving accidents due to slippery roadways
- carbon monoxide poisoning
- dehydration, hypothermia and frostbite
- exhaustion from strenuous activity
- back injuries or heart attack while removing snow
- slips and falls due to slippery walkways
- electrocution from downed power lines and downed objects in contact with power lines
- burns from fires caused by energized line contact or equipment failure
- falls from snow removal on roofs or while working in aerial lifts or on ladders
- roof collapse under weight of snow (or melting snow if drains are clogged)
- lacerations or amputations from unguarded or improperly operated chain saws and power tools, and improperly attempting to clear jams in snow blowers

Effective means of addressing winter storm hazards include:

- assume all power lines are energized and stay well clear of any downed or damaged power lines
- make certain all powered equipment is properly guarded and disconnected from power sources before cleaning or performing maintenance
- use caution around surfaces weighed down by large amounts snow or of ice
- scooping small amounts of snow and using proper lifting form to avoid over-exertion or injuries
- clear walking surfaces of snow and ice and use salt or its equivalent where appropriate
- employers should provide and ensure the use of fall protection and provide and maintain ladders
- stay in the vehicle – do not leave the vehicle unless help is visible within 100 yards
- wear reflective clothing, and eye, face and body protection
- establish and clearly marking work zones
- use engineering controls, personal protective equipment and safe work practices to reduce the length and severity of exposure to the cold.

The new Winter Storms Web page at <http://s.dol.gov/L1> includes links to guidance from OSHA, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the American Red Cross, the National Weather Service, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the National Safety Council and other agencies and organizations.

Under the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970, employers are responsible for providing safe and healthful workplaces for their employees. OSHA's role is to ensure these conditions for America's working men and women by setting and enforcing standards, and providing training, education and assistance. For more information, visit <http://www.osha.gov>.

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