

# Risk Manager

Answers, resources and information to help assess and reduce risk

## Preventing Winter Weather Slip and Fall Incidents By Mark Nease

It will not be long until Pennsylvania's winter season will be upon us. Winter weather conditions may increase the potential for slip and fall injuries on the school grounds. We may not be able to stop the snow and ice, but we can employ some basic practices to assist in reducing slip and fall risks.

- All staff should be informed of the school district's action plan for removing snow and ice from parking lots and sidewalks. This action plan should define those who will service the parking lots/sidewalks and an approximate timeframe in which it will be conducted at each school building for mornings during or after a snowfall.
- Teachers and Support staff should be instructed as to the earliest time they should arrive to work. For example when there is a two-hour delay, coming in at the same time as on a full school day schedule may be considered too early for effective grounds maintenance.
- A reporting procedure should be in place to notify appropriate personnel of potentially hazardous conditions so they may be remediated in a timely manner to reduce the potential for slip/fall incidents.
- Placing containers of ice melt near the building entrances may be beneficial so that staff can immediately address a slippery condition.
- Many slips in the parking lot occur when the person is getting out of their personal vehicle. Exit your vehicles with both hands empty. This technique is recommended in case you slip on an unexpected icy surface, you'll have both hands free to catch yourself. Once out of the vehicle, proceed to retrieve your bag, coffee mug, etc. from your car. Carrying your item at the same time you exit your vehicle may also cause you to be off-balance, as well as become more focused on the item and less focused on any potential slippery surface conditions you may encounter.
- Try to get in a habit of using a three-point contact method when entering and exiting your vehicle.
- When school district employees are asked whether they utilize handrails on a routine basis, most indicate they do not like to do so because the handrails may be dirty. Consider placing hand sanitizer stations at the entrance to buildings. The use of handrails is a necessity!
- Remember the three (3) A's of Safety. Awareness, Attitude and Action. Be cognitive of your environment at all times. During the winter season, make the assumption that walking surfaces may be slippery. Maintain an attitude of safety-mindedness. And lastly, take action to follow through with the safest method to perform the task.

Avoiding winter in Pennsylvania, along with the obstacles that it sends our way, is not an option. Confronting these obstacles with a winter safety awareness culture is a viable solution.

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For additional information or training on best practices and safety management within your school entity, please contact Director of Risk Management Sharon Orr at (866) 401-6600, ext. 7152 or [sorr@cmregent.com](mailto:sorr@cmregent.com).