



Snow/Ice walking working surfaces

Proactive planning at the end of winter for seasons to come.

Now that the winter weather is behind us and we are in the throes of spring cleanup, what are some of the aspects that we can reflect on to make next winter more successful?

Take a minute to consider the amount of slips, trips and falls that occurred within your organization last winter. This may be difficult to fully grasp on account of the fact that that we typically track incidents on an annual basis on our OSHA 300 logs. While this is a great tool, to get a full picture of the winter incidents, we need to take a look at two years' worth of data to compile a full winter season. Also, we need to consider how many slip and fall incidents occurred, but did not get reported due to the embarrassment of the injured, not reporting because of the severity of the injury, and other aspects that impact an individual's reluctance to report an incident. Once the discussion begins, look for commonality between incidents. Did a particular day of the week play into the incidents - all incidents occurred on Monday morning when the Facilities Department was not in until 10:00AM. Do employees choose to use a path that is not well maintained out of habit or due to proximity to certain parking spaces? Is a smoking area left unkempt during the winter months? Is proper footwear being considered or is fashion winning out over function? Have expectations been set, production goals agreed to, and pace remained high even though winter walking working constraints have increased?

Craft some deliverables from this style of questioning. Your deliverables should include solutions in procedure, maintenance, expectations and policies that, if actionable, will meet the goal of eliminating conditions that may result in an incident. Be proactive. Have a discussion with whomever is managing your snow and ice removal prior to the first snow. Discuss aspects that have resulted in incidents in the past and work with them to develop solutions. Consider snow piles, drifting snow, falling ice from the building, setting up drainage, and melt and refreeze. Realize that this may require a group effort between your Loss Control/HSE Department, HR Department, Facilities and outside contractors that handle snow and ice management. In some cases, one person wears all of the hats.

OSHA States:

"Slips, trips, and falls constitute the majority of general industry accidents. They cause 15% of all accidental deaths, and are second only to motor vehicles as a cause of fatalities. The OSHA standards for walking/working surfaces apply to all permanent places of employment, except where only domestic, mining, or agricultural work is performed." Ref: Safety and Health Topics | Walking/Working Surfaces. (2015). Retrieved April 6, 2015, from <https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/walkingworkingsurfaces/>

Take this opportunity to develop actionable solutions while the winter considerations are still fresh in everyone's minds. Develop the plan for next season with input from all parties. Be proactive for success in the winter months.

For additional compliance assistance, contact RiskControl360° by email at info@riskcontrol360.com or by phone at 1-877-360-3608.