



**Occupational Health and Safety  
Human Resources**

**ADVISORY MEMORANDUM**

Number 48: March 2008

Subject:  
**Prevention of Slips and Falls**

**Distribution:**

City Manager and Deputy City Managers  
Division Heads  
Occupational Health and Safety Co-ordinating Committee Members  
Health and Safety Managers  
Health and Safety Consultants  
Health and Safety Representatives (Locals 416, 79 and 3888)

**Background:**

A recent review of the City's work-related accidents and incidents indicates that slips and falls on ice and snow have resulted in numerous work-related injuries during this winter season. More than 450 slipping incidents were reported during the period from November 2007 to February 2008, a significant increase over the previous two years. This increase is likely the result of markedly more severe winter weather conditions. While many incidents have occurred with outdoor workers, such incidents have not been limited to these workers. Many indoor workers have been injured in parking lots and on walkways leading into City buildings, and on indoor floors wet with melted snow. Actions are therefore needed to reduce injury risk for the remainder of this winter and to plan ahead for next winter.

**Actions Recommended:**

The following immediate actions are recommended to prevent slip and fall incidents during the remainder of this winter season:

- Advise workers how to adjust their walking technique in icy or slippery conditions, as follows:
  - Walk slowly and carefully on icy or snowy walkways. Take short, deliberate steps in which the mid-foot strikes the ground first, not the heel. The body should always be centred over the feet. This avoids slips at the heel strike phase of gait, the most common slip occurrence. Slowing the walking pace further reduces the likelihood of slipping.
  - Avoid areas with poor lighting, when possible.
  - Change direction carefully when walking on slippery surfaces.
  - Avoid icy areas of walkways when there is an alternate route.
  - Be aware that black ice can look like wet pavement.
  - Be especially cautious when new snow may have hidden icy patches beneath it.
  - Ensure footwear has good treads and is appropriate for cold or wet weather.
  - Be aware that walkways or stairs at any premises could be slippery.
  - Avoid walking with your hands in your pockets; keep hands free for balance.
  - Where possible, avoid carrying large amounts of materials.

*For additional information please contact:*

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Human Resources Division - Occupational Health and Safety

- Carry items in a way that will not throw you off balance or obstruct vision. It is important to see where you are walking.
- Use handrails on stairs, so you can catch yourself if you slip on icy steps.
- Be aware of changes in friction on walking surfaces (for example walking from snow to ice, from curb to road, or from inside to outside).
- Be particularly careful of slippery conditions in the morning when melt water from the previous day may be frozen.
- To the extent possible, avoid climbing over snow banks and look for an alternate route. Watch out for slippery parking lots, roadways, or sidewalks when stepping out of a vehicle.
- When entering buildings or homes, be aware that immediate entrances and stairs may be slippery from melted ice or snow. When you see such a hazard, bring it to the attention of the person in charge.
- Remove the snow from the soles of your footwear as you enter a building.
- Bring to the attention of your manager or supervisor any City walkways or entrances that are slippery.
- Report any concerns, hazards, or slip, trip or fall incidents to your supervisor.
- Ensure that walkways and parking areas are cleared of ice and packed snow and that surface treatment (e.g. sand or sand/salt combination) is applied.
- Ensure that indoor floors are protected from wetness tracked in by snowy boots.

In preparation for future winter seasons, it is further recommended that:

- Consideration be given to provision of ice-grip devices to wear over footwear for outdoor workers. Piloting the use and effectiveness of these devices during the current season may still be possible.
- Adequate provisions are in place for removing ice and snow from walkways and parking areas and for responding to changing conditions, such as re-freezing of melt water.
- Where possible, hand railings are added on well-traveled and potentially slippery walkways, especially in sloped areas.
- Walkway grading problems that result in pooling of melt water are corrected.
- Signage is prepared for walkways and parking areas to caution workers of icy conditions.
- Refresher training is conducted for workers at the beginning of the icy weather period.
- Any City-issued safety footwear complies with the City's footwear contract.