

*Editor's Note: Safety Group Program Monthly Newsletter Article — Dec. 2020*

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## **Stay safe this winter: A guide to avoiding slip, trip and fall injuries and other hazards**

Winter weather brings more than rosy cheeks and songs about reindeer. During the winter, Pinnacol sees a spike in workers' compensation claims.

For the past few years, we have received the [most worker injury claims on Jan. 9](#), with an average of almost 200 workers across Colorado getting injured on this day. Many of the claims stem from slip, trip and fall injuries caused by snow or ice.

This year, winter hazards could be of even greater concern to employers. The pandemic has forced many businesses to expand their operations outdoors to help control the spread of COVID-19, as [limited space indoors](#) can make social distancing difficult. That means more workers will be out in the elements, where conditions can change rapidly.

Use our tips to help keep workers safe during wintry weather conditions. Our suggestions will help employees [avoid slip, trip and fall injuries](#) as well as navigate other winter-time hazards, such as driving to or from work in the snow or spending long stretches of the workday outside.

### **Slip, trip and fall precautions**

To keep workers safe, employers should:

- Remember that communication is key. Remind employees of impending icy conditions and encourage them to leave early and take their time getting in to work.
- Remind employees of high hazard areas such as low spots or icy spots around the building.
- Remove ice and snow from parking lots, walkways and other outdoor surfaces.
- Provide good lighting in parking lots, on walkways and at entryways.
- Position rugs and mats in front of entryways to catch melting snow and ice tracked in from outside.
- Keep rugs and mats positioned correctly, with no bumps or curling edges.
- Tell employees to move slowly outside, stepping down instead of out to keep more of their feet on the walkway. Encourage employees not to carry anything while walking to their vehicles and make multiple trips as needed.
- Suggest employees wear insulated, slip-resistant winter footwear and skip high heels and leather-soled shoes.

## Driving in bad weather

Employees should prepare their vehicles for winter weather. Tires should be in good condition, and vehicles should have a current inspection. Employers should urge workers to keep up with regular maintenance to decrease the chances of a car breaking down and suggest they:

- Keep an emergency kit in the car just in case and always have a shovel, snow brush and ice scraper available.
- Put a bright marker on the antenna or windows and shine their dome light if their vehicle stops or stalls.
- Plan routes ahead of time. Drivers should be familiar with the directions.
- Find out what type of brakes the car has – you stomp on antilock brakes and pump non-antilock brakes.
- Avoid distracted driving. Never text and drive.
- Get in and out of cars cautiously. Maintain three points of contact while exiting a vehicle — sticking two feet on the ground and one hand on the door frame or using two hands while placing one foot on the ground.

Get more tips on our [driving safety resources page](#).

## Outdoor safety tips

Employers should advise workers taking long shifts outside or going back and forth between inside and outside to:

- Recognize [symptoms of cold stress](#), such as shivering, loss of coordination and fatigue.
- Wear gloves or mittens and keep hands out of pockets when walking, so that if an employee does fall, they can catch themselves while protecting their hands.
- Layer clothing, adding or subtracting pieces depending on the temperature.
- Go inside during breaks to warm up.
- Avoid touching outdoor metal surfaces with bare skin.
- Watch weather forecasts in order to dress for the conditions.

Of course, all employees should practice social distancing and wear masks at all times, too. Have questions? Visit our [COVID-19 page](#) or direct your questions to Pinnacol's Safety On Call at [safetyoncall@pinnacol.com](mailto:safetyoncall@pinnacol.com).

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