



WORKING IN WINTER WEATHER

WINTER WEATHER- RELATED HAZARDS

Slips and falls

Hazardous road
conditions

Snow shoveling

Powered equipment
like snow blowers

Working with or
near downed or
damaged power lines

Removing downed
trees

Cold stress

Carbon Monoxide
Poisoning

What is the hazard?

Winter weather presents a number of hazards. From 2018-2021, 2,325 Kentucky workers experienced various types of winter-weather related injuries. Slips or falls were the most common, accounting for 95% of the winter weather-related occupational injuries, followed by motor vehicle collisions (2%), overexertion during snow/ice removal (2%), and other (1%).¹

Recommendations for preventing winter weather-related injuries:^{2,3,4}

- Employers should clear walkways of snow and ice, and spread deicer after a winter storm. Wearing proper footwear, such as insulated boots with rubber treads and taking short steps at a slow pace will help to prevent slips and falls.
- Ensure workers are trained for driving in winter weather conditions and licensed for the vehicles they operate. Implement a regular maintenance program for all vehicles. Keep well-stocked emergency kits in all vehicles.
- Strenuous activities like shoveling snow can lead to dehydration, injuries, and heart attacks. Workers should warm up before starting snow removal. When possible, push snow instead of lifting it. Lift small amounts at a time and use proper lift techniques: keep the back straight, lift with the legs, and avoid twisting the body.
- Add fuel before starting a snow blower—never while the engine is running. Keep your hands away from moving parts of the machine and never try to clear a jam by hand. To clear a jam, stop the engine and wait 5 seconds. Then use a solid object to clear debris.
- Extra caution should be taken when repairing/replacing damaged power lines in winter weather. When possible, work should be done with de-energized power lines. Only properly trained electrical utility workers with appropriate tools and personal protective equipment (PPE) should handle power lines.
- When removing downed trees, use only powered equipment designed for outdoor and wet conditions. Equipment should be inspected before use, and workers should wear PPE like insulated gloves, chaps, waterproof footwear, eye protection, fall protection, hearing protection, and head protection.
- Cold stress can cause injuries such as frostbite, trench foot, and hypothermia. Employers should ensure that workers have proper clothing for conditions, provide frequent breaks in warm, dry areas, and provide warm beverages and radiant heaters when possible.
- To reduce carbon monoxide poisoning risk, employers should have an effective ventilation system, avoid the use of fuel-burning equipment in enclosed or semi-enclosed spaces, and use carbon monoxide detectors.

FURTHER RESOURCES

Name of Resource	Resource Description	Resource Link
Winter Weather–Plan, Equip, Train to Prevent Injuries, Illnesses, and Fatalities during Winter Storms	OSHA's web page outlining hazards for workers during winter weather and the proper precautions.	https://www.osha.gov/winter-weather/hazards
Winter Weather Driving Tips	A guide from NHTSA for preparing to drive in winter weather.	https://www.nhtsa.gov/winter-driving-tips
Prevent Snow Shoveling and Snow Blowing Injuries	A webpage from the American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeon's providing tips for safe snow clearing.	https://orthoinfo.aaos.org/en/staying-healthy/prevent-snow-shoveling-and-snowblowing-injuries/
NIOSH Cold Stress Topic Page	NIOSH's web page providing information about preventing worker cold-related injuries and illnesses.	https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/coldstress/default.html
Carbon Monoxide Fact Sheet	OSHA's fact sheet outlining the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning and prevention measures.	https://www.osha.gov/sites/default/files/publications/carbonmonoxide-factsheet.pdf

SOURCES

1. Data source: Kentucky Department of Workers' Claims
2. Winter Weather. (n.d.). www.osha.gov. <https://www.osha.gov/winter-weather>
3. Workplace Solutions: Preventing Cold-Related Illness, Injury, and Death among Workers. (n.d.). <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/wp-solutions/2019-113/pdfs/2019-113.pdf?id=10.26616%2FNIOSH-PUB2019113>
4. Carbon Monoxide Poisoning–Occupational Safety and Health Administration. <https://www.osha.gov/sites/default/files/publications/carbonmonoxide-factsheet.pdf>.



CONTACT KOSHS

Kentucky Occupational Safety & Health Surveillance Program
 333 Waller Avenue, Suite 242
 Lexington, Kentucky 40504
 (859)-323-4750 office
 (859) 218-8924 fax
kyfaceprogram@uky.edu
 Join our mailing list: <https://lp.constantcontactpages.com/su/R3mbvyZ>



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