

Fall Prevention in Ice & Snow

Every winter season fall accidents claim the lives of hundreds and leave many more with distressing long term injuries. It is very possible that a thin sheet of transparent ice covering your pathway puts you at potential risk for an accident. When you approach a sidewalk or roadway that appears to be covered with ice or snow, always use extreme caution.

This **9-tip** checklist can help you avoid the potential injury that could lead to a painful surgery and a long term recovery:

- Take sidewalks when possible. If there is no sidewalk and the street is clear walk against the flow of traffic and stay as close to the curb as possible. Avoid walking in the streets at all costs if possible.
- If it's an emergency, and you can't avoid the street, wear bright or reflective clothing.
- Wear clothing that does not restrict your vision. Stay warm, but **DO NOT** impair your vision with hoodies, ski masks, scarves, hats, etc. This type of clothing could prevent you from spotting icy conditions leading to a fall.
- Snow and ice cause havoc quickly, so use extra caution when crossing roadways, and always cross at designated crosswalks.
- Ice hides under a light dusting of snow. Just because you don't see the ice doesn't mean it's not there waiting for your unsuspecting footfalls.
- When walking on unfamiliar sidewalks or roads, keep alert. You may not have knowledge of where potential danger exists.
- Where you can't avoid the ice and snow, bend your knees slightly and take slower, shorter steps reducing the probability of a slip and fall injury.
- When using the steps at someone's home, apartment, or public facility, walk slow and take shorter steps when descending. The same is true of driveways and other hilly terrain; these areas can be very dangerous when they become slippery. Steps especially can be hard to clear and build up ice easily.
- Be aware of **overhead exposures!** Falling icicles kill hundreds of innocent people annually. Icicles build up in size very quickly with dagger-like formations. Again, hundreds of people are injured by falling ice. Stay clear from the edges of buildings.

And, with the holidays coming to a close, most households will soon begin the somewhat cheerless chore of taking down holiday decorations and storing them away until the next season begins. Then, people should be careful while taking down the decorations, as falls can occur that could potentially lead to injuries that may raise one's life insurance premiums.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, an average of 5,800 Americans were sent to the emergency room because of falls sustained while dealing with holiday decorations in November and December in 2000-2002. Of all those accidents, 43 percent were reported to be from slipping off a ladder or falling off of a roof. Also, the survey revealed that 62 percent of the holiday accidents affected those between the ages of 20 and 49.

"The takeaway message from the holiday study is that people are changing not just their behavior but their environments during the holidays," said Judy Stevens, an epidemiologist in the CDC Injury Center's Division of Unintentional Injury Prevention.