Winter Weather Preparedness & Response

PMA Claims Information
PMA stands ready to help you 24/7. To receive assistance for weather-related claims or to call in a first report of a claim, please contact the PMA Customer Service Center, 1-888-476-2669. As always, PMA on-line claims reporting is also available.

How Cold is Too Cold?
During emergency response activities or recovery operations, workers may be required to work in cold environments, and sometimes for extended periods. Cold stress is a common problem encountered in these types of situations. Review this helpful Cold Weather FAQ prepared by the Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA) to understand what cold stress is, how it may affect worker health and safety, and how it can be prevented.

General Steps to Prepare for Winter Weather
- Review and update your winter weather policies and procedures
- Assign responsibilities and provide instruction to all parties involved
- Establish a communication process for employees
- Conduct a “tool-box” safety meeting on winter procedures
- Document your efforts
- Investigate falls and related incidents
- Understand the health risk associated with winter related exposures. Hypothermia and cardio stress are common exposures that can be controlled through following proper procedures and supervision.
- Shoveling snow and ice is a very stressful job task that all employees may not be physically capable of performing. Consider who is best qualified to complete this work, including contracting a third party company.

Preparing for Hazardous Weather Outlooks

How to Prepare: Up to 1 Week Prior to Hazardous Weather Outlook
- Listen to daily weather reports
- Prepare your location
- Inspect the exterior of building, including the roof
  - If snow is in the forecast factor in the snow loading on rooftops and awnings
  - Identify and seal any gaps where moisture can get behind the exterior coverings
- Check and unclog drains
- Prepare grounds
  - If leaves are still present remove them
  - Reduce shady areas if possible (remove tables and tents, contract awnings, etc.)
  - Turn off lawn sprinkler systems and outside hoses
• Inventory snow removal equipment and accessories
  – Ice melt
  – Shovels
  – Sand
  – Mobile equipment to remove ice
  – Squeegees
  – Brooms
  – Blowers
• Remember to document your inspection of all equipment
• Employees under the age of 18 are not permitted to operate power equipment
• Inventory items needed to house staff
• For employees who may be traveling in motor vehicles, assure each vehicle is equipped with ice melt, sand, shovel, blankets, and ice scrapers
  – Inspect all vehicles to assure they are in proper working order and prepared for winter weather operation
  – Provide each vehicle with mobile device chargers
• Establish and communicate call-in number for staff/employees
• If using a snow removal company, contact them to assure they are ready for your needs

Winter Storm Watch: 24-36 Hours Before Hazardous Weather
• Determine who will be taking the lead for snow removal
• Purchase items needed but not on hand
• Review stockpile of material
• Continue to repair areas that puddle
• Continue to check leaves, hoses, facilities, etc.
• Gather supplies needed to house and feed faculty during the storm
• Begin cordonning off areas that may form ice

Winter Storm Warning: 0-12 Hours Before Hazardous Weather
• Implement final preparation
• Apply first de-icing

During the Hazardous Weather
• Take precautions as necessary
• If possible, begin shoveling main walkways/parking lots to reduce snow accumulation

Post Hazardous Weather
• Begin removing snow according to winter weather plan
  – Blowers
  – Shovels
  – Mechanical equipment
• Once initial shoveling is completed, apply de-icer
  – Pile snow/ice in banks
  – Assure melt does not present more problems
  – Pile near drains if possible
  – Cordon off any shady area or area thick with ice
Once the Snow and Ice Begins to Melt

• Remove ice/snow as it melts
• Brush or squeegee sidewalks and parking lots where water accumulates
• Clear maintain entrances to buildings
• If temperature dips below 32 degrees or pavement temperature has not risen to 32 degrees, reapply de-icer just before sundown

Preparing Your Workers

• Define policy on how closures and early dismissals will be communicated
  – Who's calling whom?
  – Include e-mail addresses and mobile phone numbers
  – Establish call-in number for office and facility/plant closings
• HR: How will closings and early dismissals be reflected in hourly pay?

Protecting Workers and Preventing Slips & Falls

• If they need to work outdoors, workers should wear proper outerwear and footwear
  – Layer clothing
  – Avoid cotton fabrics
  – Cover your skin
• Manage breaks to avoid overexposure and common cold weather hazards such as hypothermia and cardio stress from shoveling snow and ice
• Place weather mats at all entrances for people visiting your facilities
  – The length of the mat needs to capture as much moisture off shoes as possible
    ▪ Follow the three-step guideline
    ▪ Keep porous mats outside so they absorb snow/ice from footwear
    ▪ Use relatively rough mats in foyer areas
    ▪ Use walk-off mats to remove moisture
    ▪ Change mats once saturated
  – Place shoe brushes at entrances to remove as much snow and ice as possible
  – Where applicable, provide space and facilities to allow employees to change footwear upon entering the building
  – Maintain floors and post caution signs where slip and fall conditions prevail

For additional information, please contact:

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