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Extreme weather safety tips

No one can control the weather or totally eliminate hazardous workplace conditions. But ... employers can set, implement and enforce safety practices designed to minimize risk and ensure employee safety. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration, OSHA, is here to help and offers these winter weather 'basic' tips.

Snow on Rooftops

"A surface that is weighed down by snow may be at risk of collapsing, and must be inspected by a competent person to determine if it is structurally safe for workers to access it. Snow covered rooftops can hide hazards such as skylights that workers can fall through. Electrical hazards may also exist from overhead power lines or snow removal equipment.

When and where possible, employers should protect workers from these hazardous work conditions by using snow removal methods that do not involve workers going on roofs. Employers should determine the right type of equipment (ladders, aerial lifts, etc.) and personal protective equipment (personal fall arrest systems, non-slip safety boots, etc.) for the job and ensure that workers are trained on how to properly use them.

Working near Downed or Damaged power lines

Assume all downed or damaged power lines are energized. Establish a safe distance from power lines and report any incidents to the responsible authority. Only properly-trained electrical utility workers can handle damaged power lines.

Removing Downed Trees

Clearing downed trees is a critical job. Potential hazards include **electrocution** by contact with energized power lines, **falls** from heights, and equipment related **injuries**.

- Workers using chainsaws and chippers should use: gloves, chaps, foot protection, eye protection, fall protection, hearing protection and head protection.
- Only powered equipment designed for outdoor and wet conditions should be used. Ensure that equipment is in serviceable condition and inspected, and has proper guarding (as applicable).

Shoveling Snow

Because cold weather can be tasking on the body, shoveling snow can be a strenuous activity. There is potential for exhaustion, dehydration, back injuries, or heart attacks. During snow removal, scoop small amounts of snow at a time and where possible, **push** the snow instead of lifting it. To avoid back and other injuries, use proper lifting techniques - keep the back straight; lift with the legs; do not turn or twist the body. And take frequent breaks in warm areas.”

On Snow and Ice

Clearing all walking surfaces of snow and ice, spreading deicer as quickly as possible after a winter storm, wearing proper footwear (like insulated and water resistant boots with good rubber treads), taking short steps and walking “at a slower pace so you can react quickly to a change in traction,” will prevent slips, trips and falls.

Stay safe. Find more information at www.osha.gov.