

# Cold Weather Hazards

Most workers know that shoveling snow and breaking up ice can be exhausting, but they may not be aware of the extent of their risks.

## Take cold weather hazards seriously

- Snow shoveling causes an average of nearly 100 deaths and 11,500 emergency department visits each year in the United States.
- The most frequently injured area of the body is the lower back (34%).
- Heart problems make up 7% of the injuries—but 100% of the deaths.
- The most common cause of injuries was acute musculoskeletal exertion (54%).
- Slips or falls (20%) are the second most common cause of injuries.

## Snow shovel safety

Shoveling snow is an extremely strenuous activity, especially if there's a lot of snow or if the snow is wet and heavy.

- Use ice melt, salt, or sand to decrease the hazard of icy surfaces—and the stress of clearing them.
- Snow shoveling may cause a quick increase in heart rate and blood pressure.
- Cold air makes it harder to work and breathe, which adds extra strain on the body.
- Check with your doctor to see if you should be able to do at least moderate shoveling.
- Pick the right shovel for you. A smaller blade will require you to lift less snow, putting less strain on your body.
- Plastic shovels weigh less than metal shovels, and snow is not as likely to stick to them. These factors add less weight to your load. Spray the blade with a lubricant to keep snow from sticking.
- Pick up smaller loads of snow. It's best to shovel by sections. If you are experiencing snowfall levels of 12-inches or higher, take it easy and shovel 2 inches off at a time.
- Try to clear snow early and often—take frequent breaks. Begin shoveling/blowing when a light covering of snow is on the ground.
- Push snow rather than lift it when possible, especially when the snow is heavy

Source: BLR

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