



Warming Up to Winter Safety

Many cold weather states have had a hard winter already. Snow and ice have a brighter side, however: they make for better winter sports. The National Safety Council offers tips for you and your employees to enjoy winter and minimize outdoor injury risks.

Shoveling Snow

Shoveling may not be recreational, but it is good exercise. It can also cause injuries from overexertion, so be sure to warm up before shoveling, work slowly and take breaks. To help avoid injury:

- Shovel when snow is fresh and easier to remove than wet, packed-down snow.

- When lifting, bend from the knees and keep your back straight to reduce stress on the spine.

- Avoid picking up too much snow at once. Use a small shovel or fill only a quarter or half of a large one.

- Pace yourself. If you run out of breath, take a break.

Sledding

Sledding is exhilarating for people of all ages but can also lead to injuries, despite snow's cushioning effect. Sled on gently sloping hills with level run-offs at the end, to allow sleds to come to safe halt. Keep in mind:

- Always sled feet-first, sitting up or laying on your back.

- Watch for any obstructions in your path. Avoid trees, fences, rocks and telephone poles.

- Use slopes that are far removed from streets or frozen bodies of water.

Ice Skating and Skiing

With any sport, safety should come first. The NSC strongly advises novice and experienced athletes to learn or reacquaint themselves with proper sports skills and safety techniques.

- Wear ice skates that fit comfortably and provide ankle support. Have blades professionally sharpened at the beginning of each season.

- Ice skate only in designated skating areas. Watch for cracks, holes or debris on the ice and know how to stop and fall safely.

- When skiing, follow posted trail signs and rules. Look both ways and uphill before crossing.

- If you need to stop, pull over to the side of a run. Stay out of the way of other skiers to avoid collision.