

MOHSS

Montana Occupational Health & Safety Surveillance

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Transitional Weather Slipping Hazards

Watch your step

With spring just around the corner, Montana workers must be wary of many outdoor slipping hazards. In 2017, the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS)¹ reported over 20,000 work-related injuries due to slips on ice and snow. These injuries are not exclusive to jobs that require outdoor work; employees can be injured doing something routine, such as walking to work from a parking lot or sidewalk. Furthermore, the ground is incredibly



Figure 1



Figure 2

slick when many of us arrive at or leave work. As the temperature climbs just above freezing in the morning and falls below freezing after dark, water undergoes what scientists call “phase-change,” wherein a substance transitions from liquid to solid and vice versa. As water changes phase (melts/freezes), it becomes incredibly slick (Fig. 1). Be aware of ice on shady sides of buildings and between parked cars. To minimize the risk of slipping, consider keeping shoes fitted with elastic snow cleats by the door or in your vehicle (Fig. 2).

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Eye Injury Awareness and Prevention

Watch out for safety

A worker’s ability to see clearly on the job is critical to occupational safety. Therefore, it is essential to protect our eyes not only at home but also at work. Though relatively rare, work-related eye injuries do happen. However, as with all occupational injuries, they are largely preventable.



Figure 3

March is Workplace Eye Safety Awareness Month. In light of that, here are a couple of tips to prevent eye injuries on the job. First, always wear protective glasses or goggles when working conditions involve sharp objects, flying debris, caustic liquids, or harmful chemicals (Fig. 3).

Second, do not keep the glasses or goggles on top of your head. Always keep them lowered over the eyes, and ensure they are free of smudges or anything that prevents you from seeing clearly. Ask your supervisor for a new pair if your glasses or goggles are scratched/damaged. Third, protect your eyes from excessive sunlight. Exposure to direct or reflected sunlight can lead to many conditions, including cataracts, retinal damage, and cancer. While Earth’s atmosphere helps shield us from harmful wavelengths of sunlight, such as ultraviolet (UV) radiation, prolonged exposure to sunlight can cause permanent damage to one’s eyes.



Additionally, elevation plays a vital part in UV exposure; higher elevations have less atmospheric protection and, therefore, a higher risk of harmful UV exposure. Since Montana has an average elevation of ~3,400 feet above sea level and many parts of the state are at greater elevations, there is a heightened risk of UV exposure. When outdoors for work or pleasure, consider wearing UV-protective sunglasses. If you work indoors, remember to bring your sunglasses when you come inside (Fig. 3). Transitioning from artificially lit buildings to direct sunlight can be particularly hard on unprotected eyes. Please visit our website for additional reports and updates (erd.dli.mt.gov/mohss)

Sources:

¹. Bureau of Labor Statistics