

TOOLBOX TALK



DISCUSSION TOPIC: Winter Work

Walkways – Shoveling

Shoveling snow and removing ice can be a straightforward process, but it is a winter task that can easily result in an injury. Consider a person who is sitting at a desk working for a long period of time deciding to go outside and shovel in cold weather. They are potentially opening themselves up to a number of different possible injuries.

Here are some examples that can lead to an injury while shoveling:

- Not wearing the proper winter clothing: gloves, footwear, hat, scarf, etc.
- Using poor posture. Lifting with your back.
- Using snow shovels that are not ergonomically friendly.
- Overexerting yourself, or rushing to get the shoveling done, increases the risk of a slip, trip or fall.
- An increase in heart rate and blood pressure can make a blood clot more easily, constrict arteries, decrease blood supply and potentially lead to a cardiac arrest.



How to protect yourself and avoid an injury while shoveling:

- Prior to shoveling, consider using mechanical methods to clear snow, such as a vehicle with a plow or snow blower.
- Before you start shoveling, take the time to warm up your body by properly stretching.
- Do not overexert yourself. If you are not used to a heavy physical workload, or have health issues, use mechanical methods, or have others complete the task.
- Always use proper posture when shoveling. Avoid rounding your back or twisting when lifting. Always lift with your legs not your back.
- Push snow out of the way rather than lift it when possible.
- Use an ergonomically friendly S-shaped handle snow shovel.
- Wear the proper winter clothing: gloves, footwear, hat, scarf, etc.
- Use the hierarchy of controls and plan your work accordingly.

Summary

It's easy to take shoveling for granted and think, "I'll just power through this and be on with my day." But as you can see in the information above, thinking ahead and taking your time in completing the task can be the difference between your health and an injury.