

WINTER STORMS

Last year OSHA came out with an emphasis on heat-related hazards and illnesses. Because there is no OSHA standard for getting your workers too hot, citations for heat exhaustion were given under the General Duty Clause. The General Duty Clause is OSHA's "catch-all" category and simply states that we have a responsibility under federal regulation to provide a "safe and healthful workplace" for every one of our employees. These heat-related citations caused the General Duty Clause to become the seventh most cited OSHA standard last year with over \$84,000 in fines.

Recently OSHA came out with a similar "Winter Storms" advisory. If the focus their enforcement activities on frostbite like they did heat exhaustion, we better pay attention. Here are the hazards we should be guarding against this winter:

- Driving accidents due to slippery roadways
- Carbon monoxide poisoning
- Hypothermia and frostbite due to the cold weather exposure
- Exhaustion from strenuous activity
- Dehydration
- Back injuries or heart attack while removing snow
- Slips and falls due to slippery walkways
- Electrocution due to downed power lines or downed objects in contact with power lines
- Burns from fires caused by energized line contact or equipment failure
- Being struck by falling objects such as icicles, tree limbs, and utility poles
- Falls from snow removal on roofs, or while working in aerial lifts or on ladders
- Roof collapse under weight of snow (or melting snow if drains are clogged)
- Lacerations or amputations from unguarded or improperly operated chain saws and power tools, and improperly attempting to clear jams in snow blowers

Cold temperatures, snow and ice bring with them hazards we don't normally encounter every day. Communicate to every employee the need to take extra precautions during this time of year especially to prevent overexposure, slips and falls. Clean up water from melting ice in buildings and walkways. Take the time to redirect melting ice when needed. Plan ahead to prevent the same injuries we had last year at this time.

Produced by the Institute of Scrap Recycling Industries

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Comments/questions?

isrisafety@isri.org

February 7, 2012