

MICHIGAN



MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY: Prevention of work-related injuries & illnesses through research & investigation

WORK-RELATED HOSPITALIZATIONS FROM ICE-RELATED FALL INJURIES IN MICHIGAN

Wintertime in Michigan increases the risk of falling due to icy conditions. According to Michigan’s hospital surveillance data, 60 workers were hospitalized in 2014, 54 in 2015, 28 in 2016, 33 in 2017, 27 in 2018, 52 in 2019, 14 in 2020, 23 in 2021, 20 in 2022, 14 in 2023, 8 in 2024 and 12 in 2025 after falling on the ice at work. Possible reasons for the decrease could be due to better preventive activity or warmer weather; the average temperature in Detroit for the months of November, December, January, February and March has increased from 26.8° F in 2014 to 32.2° F in 2025 (source: National Weather Service NOWData-NOAA Online Weather Data query).

The injuries identified are just the tip of the proverbial iceberg since they do not include people with less serious injuries who were treated in Emergency Departments, urgent care clinics or a doctor’s office. The numbers also do not include hospitalizations where Workers’ Compensation was not listed as the expected payer.

All but 35 of the hospitalizations involved fractures. Almost two thirds of the fractures were of the lower extremity. Most of these hospitalizations required surgery. Individuals were in the hospital for an average of 3 days (range 1-16 days). Who were these 338 people? 62% were men. These workers were mostly in their 50s and their ages ranged from 17-85 years. They worked in a variety of industries including health care, manufacturing, public administration, education, wholesale and retail trade, utilities and transportation, construction, arts and entertainment, professional and financial services, agriculture, funeral homes and hotel and food services.

EXAMPLES OF WORK-RELATED HOSPITALIZATIONS FROM ICE-RELATED FALL INJURIES IN MICHIGAN

- A construction worker in his 80’s slipped on some ice in a driveway at a work location. He hit his head and drove himself to a hospital. Several days later he died in the hospital.
- A bus driver in his 50’s slipped on ice and snow while walking through a blacktop paved parking lot on the way to his car after completing his morning bus run, and broke his leg. He was hospitalized. After he received treatment at the hospital, he was discharged home. Several days later he died from complications of his injuries from his fall on the ice and snow.
- A female retail worker in her 50’s fractured her hip when she slipped on ice while clearing snow and ice at her workplace. She was hospitalized for three days. A Michigan OSHA inspection cited the company for not reporting the injury. She reported being fired from this job after her injury.
- A man in his 20’s broke his leg when he slipped on some ice and fell on cement at his workplace. He was in the hospital for two days after surgery to repair his leg.

IN ORDER TO PREVENT SIMILAR INCIDENTS IN THE FUTURE

- Keep all walkways cleared of ice and snow.
- Have de-icing products handy for hard-to-remove ice or snow.
- Make sure all walkways & passageways are clearly marked & well-lit.
- Be careful of slippery surfaces inside buildings.
- Wear slip-resistant footwear.
- Practice safe walking on slippery surfaces by taking slow, small steps.
- Step down, not out, from curbs.
- Avoid carrying heavy loads that may offset your balance.
- Clearly mark or barricade hazardous areas.
- Wear sunglasses on sunny days to lessen winter glare.
- Take extra precaution when entering and exiting vehicles.

SOURCE: MIOSHA Tips for Winter Workplace Safety.

RESOURCES

OSHA Winter Weather. Plan. Equip. Train.
https://www.osha.gov/dts/weather/winter_weather/hazards_precautions.html#walking

OSHA Falls and Other Hazards to Workers Removing Snow from Rooftops and Other Elevated Surfaces.
<https://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA-3513roof-snow-hazard.pdf>

Cold Stress. The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health.
<http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/coldstress/>

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DID YOU KNOW?

- A study from Maine showed ice related falls were more common in the morning and higher-injury days occurred when there were snowfall events, when temperatures remained below freezing following snowfall events or when snowfall accumulations were subject to daily thawing and re-freezing.
https://www1.maine.gov/labor/labor_stats/publications/injuries/SlipFallOnIce.pdf