

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 and 28 in 2016 after falling on the ice at work. Possible reasons for the decrease could be due to better preventive activity or warmer weather, average temperature in Detroit for the months of November, December, January, February and March was 28.4° F in 2014, 31.8° F in 2015 and 35°F in 2016.

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 16 of the hospitalizations involved fractures, and more than half were of the lower extremity. Most of these hospitalizations required surgery. Individuals were in the hospital for an average of 3 days (range 1-12 days). Who were these 142 people? Women and men were equally represented. These workers were mostly in their 50s and their ages ranged from 18-73 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 male custodial supervisor in his 30's fell on ice while taking trash out to a dumpster. He died from complications of the cervical spinal cord injury that occurred when he fell.
- A man in his 20's slipped on the ice in the elevated bucket on a tractor in which he was standing. He fell about 15 feet, striking the tractor and then the ground. He briefly lost consciousness. He had a skull fracture, subdural hematoma and multiple vertebral fractures. He had surgical repair to his spine. He was in the hospital four days.
- A male utility worker in his 50's was pulling on a tool that was stuck in ice in the bed of his truck. The tool abruptly came loose and he slipped on ice and fell. He had surgery to repair fractures of his leg and ankle, and a ligament tear. He was in the hospital for three days.
- A man in his 30's who was cutting trees in icy and snowy conditions, slipped and fell 30 feet from a tree. He briefly lost consciousness and suffered a traumatic brain injury. He had surgical repair of arm, finger, wrist and pelvic fractures. He had a laceration to his liver. He was in the hospital five days.
- A man in his 20's slipped on the ice at the door of his workplace. He had a fracture of his ankle that required surgery. He was in the hospital four days.

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.

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

RESOURCES

MIOSHA Tips for Winter Workplace Safety. Don't Roll the Dice with Snow and Ice.

http://www.michigan.gov/lara/0,4601,7-154-10573_70408---,00.html

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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