



# WINTER PREPAREDNESS FOR FACILITIES

As winter approaches certain steps should be undertaken to prepare for the coming cold, snow and ice. The following resources and best practices are included to help plan for and prevent some of the most common and costly claims from occurring.

## Winter Slip, Trip and Fall Prevention Plan

One of the largest hazards with winter arises from snow and ice, contributing to slips, trips and falls. A proactive slip, trip and fall prevention plan is an excellent method to reduce the risk of injury. Step Wisely is a no-cost program provided to MCIT member organizations. It includes awareness and training materials that can be used to reduce slip, trip and fall injuries to both employees and visitors on member property.

Although training and awareness of the hazards of slips and falls is important, a key aspect of preventing winter slip and fall accidents is snow and ice removal. Creating a formal plan to address snow and ice removal or control can help prepare for winter hazards in an organized and effective way.

Documentation is an important component of this plan. Documenting items such as, snow/ice removal, salt/ice melt or abrasive use, inspections, repairs and details of incident sites, provide a record that allows facility maintenance staff to plan for the future. It can also provide evidence in the event of liability investigations or disputes. In situations where visitors are injured, prompt collection of information and documentation can greatly assist with any future liability claims. This may include photographs and details of the incident scene, gathering information from any injured parties or witnesses, and saving video surveillance if applicable.

## Freeze-up Prevention Plan

Water leaks or burst pipes can be one of the largest property costs for MCIT members. As winter approaches, it is important to continue preventive maintenance on heating equipment, as low winter temperatures put them to the test and increases the risk of damage or leaks. All vulnerable pipes should be identified and attention paid to areas that may have changed occupancy or may be susceptible to cold.

Despite these best practices, pipes may freeze or roofs may leak. In such a case, a response plan should be in place to inform, identify and address the leaks as quickly as possible. This plan should be communicated to key staff to reduce the effects of a leak.

## Roof Maintenance Plan

The integrity of the roof is vital. A well-maintained roof helps prevent water infiltration, reduces risk of structural damage and can lower liability risk resulting from falling or accumulating snow or ice. Conducting pre-winter surveys of the rooftop and roof drainage can help identify and address issues before damage or leaks occur.

Care must be taken when performing maintenance or repairs on the roof. Employees should be trained on proper procedures for safe roof maintenance. Also, carefully review the roof warranty and manufacturer's guidelines to determine appropriate rooftop snow removal and repairs so as not to void the warranty.

Documentation is also important. Rooftop inspection logs can help track areas in need of attention and keep track of past repairs.

## WINTER PREPAREDNESS

# Slip, Trip and Fall Prevention Plan Checklist

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Property: \_\_\_\_\_ Inspected by: \_\_\_\_\_

Slip, Trip and Fall Prevention Plan	Yes	No	Action Item
Is there adequate salt/grit/sand or other ice-melting or traction-providing material available for the coming winter?			
Are entry mats sufficient to handle the increased volumes of water from melting snow?			
Does outdoor lighting provide sufficient visibility of walkways and parking lots?			
Step Wisely (MCIT no-cost awareness program):			
• Are awareness materials posted by entryways and in areas where employees gather?			
• Are the materials changed often to keep the messages fresh?			
• Are temporary caution posters used to warn of changing weather conditions or other hazards?			
• Have employees been educated about slip, trip and fall hazard identification and reporting procedures?			
Is a method of communication in place that allows staff to receive and respond to concerns regarding slip, trip and fall hazards?			
Snow Removal Plan	Yes	No	Action Item
Are procedures and assignments in place and staff trained regarding snow removal operations, including responsibilities of the entity or where to put the removed snow?			
Is the facility staff trained on using the equipment and on safe shoveling practices?			
Is all snow removal equipment tested and operational?			
Is the weather being monitored for changing conditions for all locations?			
Are snow/ice removal tasks documented?			
Are procedures in place to document slip and fall incidents?			

# WINTER PREPAREDNESS

# Snow and Ice Removal Log

**Complete or check all that apply.**

[illegible]



# CAUTION

**Changing Weather Conditions.  
Walk Carefully.**

# SLIP, TRIP AND FALL PREVENTION PROGRAM



**Step Wisely**

The Step Wisely program helps members prevent slip, trip and fall incidents among employees and visitors. The resulting injuries can be prevented or the severity limited when employees and the public are aware of hazards and take precautions. Injuries from a slip and fall can range from simple bruises to broken bones, dislocated joints and severe head and back injuries.

**Download materials at: [MCIT.org](http://MCIT.org)**

## Display Materials

The following materials can be placed around facilities to make employees and the public aware of slip, trip and fall hazards and ways to prevent injury.

- **Wall posters:** Place in areas of high visibility, such as exits, entries, lobbies or where hazards are likely.
- **Table tents:** These work well in break rooms, waiting areas and on service counters.



## Digital Materials

The following materials can be sent via email or posted electronically to make employees and the public aware of slip, trip and fall hazards and ways to prevent injury.

- **Digital images:** Can be used as ready-to-send e-mail messages, as computer lock screen images, intranet posts, employee newsletter items and more.
- **Short animated videos:** A video link can be sent in an e-mail or embedded on an intranet. Videos can also be played during employee training or meetings.



## Temporary 'Caution' Posters

Use the "caution" posters to alert people to changing or unexpected conditions. They are to be used temporarily and in conjunction with other practices, such as shoveling and salting/sanding walkways.

- **Slick conditions:** This sign is intended to warn people exiting buildings that walking surfaces may be slippery due to changing weather conditions.
- **Specific need:** This poster includes a blank section, allowing users to enter a message based on a specific need, such as "Watch for loose floor tiles."

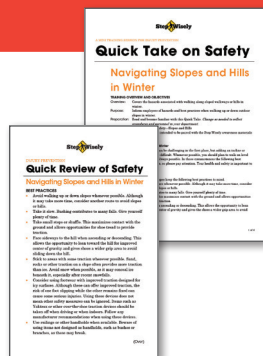




## Training Scripts, Handouts

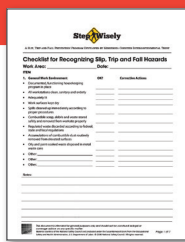
Once employees are aware of hazards, it is good practice to reinforce the messages with training.

- **Quick Take on Safety training scripts:** These take just about five minutes to review and provide practical actions employees can take to reduce hazards and injuries. Each script focuses on a particular hazard or situation. Supervisors can customize the script to the particular work circumstances of their teams. A corresponding employee handout for each topic is available.



## Other Resources

- **Checklist:** A ready-to-use tool for employees to assess properties for slip, trip and fall hazards.
- **MCIT.org articles:** These provide strategies for managing claims and mitigating hazards.
- **Minnesota Safety Council Membership:** MCIT membership includes a Minnesota Safety Council membership. Access safety videos, fact sheets and articles at [MinnesotaSafetyCouncil.org](http://MinnesotaSafetyCouncil.org).



## Loss Control Consultation

The member's assigned MCIT loss consultant can provide safety information, consultation and training at no cost. For example, consultants can survey properties with members to identify slip, trip and fall hazards, and provide recommendations for how to manage them.

Connect with your loss control consultant at **1.866.547.6516 toll-free** or [info@mcit.org](mailto:info@mcit.org).



## TIPS FOR AN EFFECTIVE PREVENTION CAMPAIGN

Campaigns are more successful when the message is delivered often and in different formats.

### Incorporate All Elements of Step Wisely

For the most impact, utilize all of the program's features: display materials, training features and best practices.

### Swap Visuals Often

After a while the display materials become part of the everyday background. To catch employees' attention, use one display at a time and switch them every few weeks.

### Use Digital Images in a variety of Ways

Print and distribute at staff meetings, on employees desks, payroll envelopes or in the employee newsletter. Post to the organization's intranet, set them as a lock screen background of employees' computers or send in e-mails to employees.

### Encourage Use of Quick Takes

These training scripts can be used at team meetings, as the basis for a short training skit or as discussion starters.

### Include Materials in New Employee Orientation

Emphasize the organization's commitment to safety from day one with new hires. Discuss how they can help recognize, remedy and report safety hazards at work.

### Include All Departments

Display awareness materials in all departments. Inform department heads and supervisors about how they can take a leadership role in training their employees about recognizing, remedying and reporting hazards.

### Alert Staff to Temporary Hazards

As conditions in the workplace change, such as a heavy storm or loose floor tiles, alert staff to the hazard with signage, e-mails or other appropriate methods.

### Create Your Own Step Wisely Items

If the workplace has a slip, trip and fall issue not addressed by Step Wisely, get creative and make your own awareness, training and loss prevention materials.

### Create a Culture of Safety

Encourage employees to report safety concerns and have appropriate staff respond quickly to them. See the "Safety Culture" guide and the "Safety Committees" handbook for strategies to build a positive safety culture.

### Conduct Self-inspections

Each department can use the "Checklist for Recognizing Slip, Trip and Fall Hazards" to inspect its area and work with appropriate staff to remedy any issues they may find.

# Freeze-up Prevention Checklist

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Property: \_\_\_\_\_ Inspected by: \_\_\_\_\_

**IMPORTANT:** Ensure the inspection team is protected from falls from roof edges, access points and any skylights.

Preventive Maintenance	Yes	No	Action Item
Are the following pieces of equipment being maintained in accordance with manufacturer guidelines and are records kept:			
• HVAC?			
• Boilers?			
• Water heaters?			
• Backup generators?			
• Air compressors?			
Has outdoor equipment been equipped with low-temperature lubricants where applicable?			
Are unit heaters tested prior to winter for functionality?			
Rooftops	Yes	No	Action Item
Are employees and/or contractors trained to clear snow and other obstructions safely from the roof without damaging the roof or liners?			
Are roof drainage areas clear of obstructions?			
Are flashings, curbing and other seams on the roof leak-free and well-maintained?			
Are gutters or drainage directed away from walkways?			
Are trees trimmed away from rooftops?			
Frozen Pipe Plan	Yes	No	Action Item
Is a response plan in place should a pipe burst or a leak occur?			
In the event of a burst pipe or leak, are key staff members trained to inform maintenance personnel and to turn off the water?			
Are water shut-off valves easily accessible and well-labeled?			
Are all water pipes identified throughout the facility?			
Have any rooms changed occupancy since the previous year to where they may no longer be heated?			
Is heating sufficient in transitional areas where water pipes are located? (e.g., vestibules, entryways)			
Are systems/procedures in place to alert of heating failure in a timely manner?			
Are all pipes located in unheated areas and outdoors properly insulated or otherwise protected to prevent against freezing?			
Are sealed system water pipes equipped with a sufficient amount of antifreeze solution?			

# Preventing Sprinkler System Losses During Extreme Cold

**Date:** April 2020

Automatic fire suppression sprinkler systems have proven to help protect building occupants and property but have been a source of claims for MCIT, especially during the winter months. Over the past several years, MCIT members have had numerous losses due to frozen, cracked sprinkler piping, valves, fittings and sprinkler heads, some causing hundreds of thousands of dollars in damage.

Losses occur when water in sprinkler systems freeze, cracking or bursting pipes, and then temperatures rise, thawing the ice and water flows out of the system, damaging facilities.

## Prevent Damage

To prevent or reduce the severity of sprinkler system losses, MCIT members are encouraged to:

- have functioning water flow and anti-tamper alarms that sound on site and off site using a monitoring service.
- inspect and maintain sprinkler systems and alarms per the manufactures' recommendations and local code requirements.
- develop a plan and assign responsibilities for intended or emergency outages of fire protection systems or equipment. This includes when an alarm or detection device is either partially or completely removed from service.
- establish a freeze-up prevention program.

Freeze-up prevention programs include items such as:

- performing physical surveys to identify areas prone to freezing and take corrective action.
- properly winterizing equipment exposed to cold temperatures.
- developing a procedure to be followed if heat or electricity is lost.
- establishing a process and assign responsibilities for monitoring equipment and buildings during extreme cold weather and thawing periods.

MCIT loss control consultants can provide additional information and assistance with establishing sprinkler system maintenance and freeze-up prevention programs. Members can reach them toll-free at **1.866.547.6516**.





# Roof Maintenance Checklist

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Property: \_\_\_\_\_ Inspected by: \_\_\_\_\_

**IMPORTANT:** Ensure the inspection team is protected from falls from roof edges, access points and any skylights.

<b>Rooftop Maintenance Plan</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Action Item</b>
Are all records for roofing materials and specifications reviewed?			
Does the roof maintenance plan follow the manufacturer's guidelines?			
Are the terms of the roof warranty reviewed before action is taken?			
Are maintenance employees trained on procedures for safe roof maintenance?			
Are inspections and repairs documented and retained?			
Is roof access restricted to maintenance employees?			
Is there a plan in place for proper rooftop snow removal if needed?			
<b>Roof Integrity</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Action Item</b>
Are roof supports secure with no signs of deterioration, expansion/contraction, cracks, sagging and other physical damage?			
Are interior and exterior areas free of water damage?			
Is the structure free of nearby dead trees or limbs?			
Does the roof support the anticipated weight of the wet/dry snow load?			
<b>Rooftop</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Action Item</b>
Is drainage functional, undamaged and unobstructed?			
Is ballast placed evenly throughout the rooftop?			
Is the membrane:			
• Free of punctures, tears and splits?			
• Well-fastened to the roof surface?			
• Free of ridges and curls?			
Are icebreakers or snow guards installed and repaired on slanted roofs above entryways if necessary?			
Are measures taken to prevent ice and snow from falling off the roof onto sidewalks, gas meters and vehicles?			
<b>Flashing, Coping, Counterflashing and Seals</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Action Item</b>
Are flashing, coping and counterflashing secure and free of deterioration and punctures?			
Is drainage sufficient around flashing, coping and counterflashing?			
Is caulking in good condition?			
Are expansion joints, pitch pans and other roof penetrations free of deterioration and are they water tight?			
Are seals around equipment intact?			
Are waterproof seals on the edges of the roof intact?			

WINTER PREPAREDNESS

## Rooftop Sketch/Plan

Place a satellite image of the rooftop, facility rooftop floor plan or sketch of the roof surface on this page. Note any defects or damage that needs repair or attention.