

Safety Short



Snow Shoveling Safety Tips

Snow Shoveling is hard work and can put severe stress on your heart, back, leg, neck, and arm muscles. Along with physical strain, other hazards exist, including slips and falls, exposure to weather extremes and proximity to traffic. To provide safe access of employees and the public to municipal properties, snow removal is a necessary and (in Maine) a frequent task. Please follow these tips to prevent injuries while shoveling snow.

-  Wear proper winter foot wear. Use ice grips if slippery. Sand icy areas as you clear them. Avoid slips/falls.
-  Dress for the weather conditions. Wear layers and protect areas such as fingers, toes, ears and face. Wear a hat to prevent heat loss from the head.
-  Stretch before you start and periodically while you work. “Warming up” will help prevent injury and fatigue.
-  Select a shovel that is (blade plus handle) elbow height when standing upright. Use a smaller blade for “wet” (heavier) snow and / or don’t fill it. A plastic grip does not get as cold as metal.
-  By keeping distance between your hands on the shovel handle, you increase leverage and reduce strain. Place hands more than 12” apart.
-  Push the snow rather than lifting it. If you must throw it, lift using your legs, turn your feet in the direction you are throwing. Avoid twisting and never throw snow over your shoulder. Better yet, walk to where you will dump it.
-  Work at a steady pace and shovel efficiently without becoming fatigued. Avoid shoveling at a pace that makes you sweat so that you don’t get a chill when you stop. Hydrate frequently and take breaks.
-  Shoveling more than once during a large storm not only reduces moving heavy loads and strain but maintains safe access to walks and doorways throughout a storm.
-  If you feel unusual fatigue, dizziness, tightness in your chest, or have trouble breathing, stop immediately. Have your cell phone with you in case of emergency.