Snow Shoveling Guidelines

DEFINITION:

Shoveling snow can expose a worker to a variety of hazards, including muscle fatigue, low back strain, vertebral disc damage, spinal fractures and even heart attacks.

Some of these injuries result from muscle strain, excessive stress to spinal structures. Others from slip and fall accidents. Stress on the heart can also be a factor while shoveling snow.

AWARENESS TRAINING AND COMMON SENSE:

- Workers with heart problems should consult with their doctor regarding this type of work.
- Pace yourself. Shoveling heavy snow can raise your heart rate and blood pressure. During shoveling activities take frequent breaks and drink plenty of water. It is important to re-hydrate your body.
- If the snow is too heavy to lift, push it like a snow plow. Push snow out of the way when possible. It’s less strenuous to push snow than to throw it with a shovel. Do not try to lift too much at once.
- Do not work to the point of exhaustion. Take short, 30 second breaks and more frequently as required for your safety.
- Wear a scarf or mask. Inhaling cold air may constrict arteries, decreasing your heart's supply of oxygen. Also, wear a hat, since you lose most of your body heat through your head.
- Use your legs when you scoop, keep them bent, let your shoulders, torso, and thighs do the work for you.
- Dress warmly and wear boots with treads designed to keep you from falling.
- Spread salt on thick ice before attempting to shovel.
• Warm up your muscles. Do a few stretching exercises so that the work doesn’t come as a shock to your system.

• The most severe injuries and pain are likely to occur in the back region. Recognizing the lower back is especially susceptible to strain or injury is beneficial to preventing injury.

• Bend at the knee as you scoop the snow to reduce strain on your back and heart.

• Ice on pathways – it is recommended that pathways be salted first and then allowed some time for the salt to work – then removing the ice becomes a lot easier.

• Tractor should do most of the work, shoveling should be restricted to stairways and areas that tractors cannot get to.

• Sun-Snow Blindness - wear glare protection on bright sunny days.