WEEK 1 JANUARY / DEEP WINTER · ~5 MIN READ · ONTARIO CONSTRUCTION

Slips, Trips & Falls on Ice and Snow

It's -15 °C, still dark when you start, and last night's melt froze into black ice on the ramp. Winter slips are ordinary and preventable — and most of the prevention is a surface someone owns, not a habit someone remembers.

The hazard

Ice hides. Black ice and packed snow look like wet pavement. A fall near rebar, on a stair edge, or from a ladder or platform is far more serious than one on flat ground, and carrying tools or loads makes it harder to stay upright.

The part that gets missed: Ontario doesn't treat this as a once-a-morning job. **Work areas, the routes to and from them, and scaffold platforms in use have to be kept clear of snow, ice, and anything else slippery at all times, and sanded when footing needs it.** Conditions change through the day, so the duty runs through the day.

What to do

- **Give the surfaces an owner, all shift.** Someone is assigned to inspect, clear, and re-treat walkways, ramps, stairs, entrances, and active scaffold platforms — before use and again whenever conditions change. **Keep a route closed until it has firm footing.** A single salt run at 7 a.m. isn't the duty.
- Keep sand, salt, or grit stocked where it's needed, and say something before the bucket is empty.
- **Winter boots with deep, soft-rubber tread.** Use traction devices where the site assessment says they help — and take them off before ladders, smooth indoor floors, and driving, where they cut your grip or foul the pedals.
- **Walk like a penguin** on suspect ground: short flat steps, feet a bit wider, weight over your front foot.
- **Keep your hands free** for balance and for the handrail. Not in your pockets — but don't count on catching yourself either; putting a hand out is how wrists and shoulders get hurt.
- **Stairs and ladders are different.** On stairs, use the handrail. On a ladder, face it and keep three points of contact, with clean boots and nothing in your hands.
- **Carry less.** Two trips or a cart, so you can see your feet.

Watch out for

- Black ice near doorways, downspouts, and anywhere melt runs and re-freezes in the same spot every night.
- Packed snow on stairs and scaffold planks turning to glass underfoot.
- Worn-down boot tread — check yours today.
- A path that was fine this morning and hasn't been looked at since.

Talk it over

- Where does ice keep forming on this site, who's checking those spots today, and when do they re-treat?
- Is there anywhere right now that should be closed rather than sanded?

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