WEEK 49 EARLY DECEMBER · ~5 MIN READ · ONTARIO CONSTRUCTION

Back to Ice & Snow: Winter Footing

Black ice on a steel deck, a glazed ladder rung, a packed-snow path in from the truck — the footing turns on you right where you're about to put your weight. A few minutes of grit, cleats, and cleared paths at the start of the day keeps the whole crew upright, and somebody has to own it all shift.

The hazard

Black ice looks like wet pavement. Packed snow turns to glass under boots. Add a slope, stairs, a scaffold, or a load in your arms and a slip becomes a serious fall — and frozen ground gives you nothing soft to land on. The catch in December is that conditions change through the day: what was gritted at 7 a.m. is bare by noon and glazed again by four.

What to do

- **The duty runs all shift.** Work areas, the routes to and from them, and scaffold platforms in use have to be kept clear of snow and ice, and sanded when footing needs it — **at all times, not once in the morning.** Assign who inspects, clears, and re-treats as conditions change, and **close a route that can't be made safe yet** rather than leaving it to individual care.
- **Keep sand, salt, or grit stocked** at the entrances and stairs, and say something before the bucket is empty rather than after.
- **Clear snow and chip ice off work surfaces, scaffolds, and stair treads** before anyone uses them.
- **Winter boots with deep, aggressive 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 catch a pedal.
- **Walk like a penguin** on ice: short flat steps, slow, weight over your feet, hands free for balance and rails.
- **Use the cleared paths.** Don't shortcut over snowbanks or untreated ground — that's where the buried hazards are.

Watch out for

- Wet-looking pavement near doorways and downspouts — that's usually ice.
- **Getting in and out of a vehicle.** Stepping down onto an icy, uneven surface while holding the door is one of the easiest ways to go down. Take it slow, keep a hand on the vehicle.
- Snow-covered holes, rebar, and trip hazards you can no longer see.
- The route that was fine this morning and hasn't been looked at since.

Talk it over

- Where does this site ice up worst, who's re-treating it this afternoon, and is anything bad enough to close right now?
- Does everyone have proper winter boots today, and do the people using cleats know where to take them off?

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