



Reduce Steps to Help Reduce Falls

Winter slip and fall safety initiatives often focus on tactics that can help reduce the likelihood of a slip and fall. Examples include footwear policies, snow and ice maintenance procedures and raising employee awareness. These are critical to reduce the risk of injury for employees and are valuable elements of United Heartland's WalkSafe campaign.

However, safety leaders often overlook a critical factor: reducing overall exposure to the hazard. For any task, risk grows as exposure to the hazard increases and as additional employees are exposed. For this document, exposure is defined as the number of steps employees take while exposed to snow/ice.

Consider how many steps your employees take outdoors every winter. While this number can vary widely for among organizations, let's use 100,000 steps as an example. Is there any way to reduce this to 90,000 steps? This alone reduces risk for employees by 10%.

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Utilize UH Tools

Our WalkSafe campaign includes regular communications about how to reduce slip and fall exposures. Each phase has several useful resources and materials for you to use. We encourage your organization to consider how this information can best be utilized and distributed to other departments and employees.

At any time during the campaign, we encourage you to visit [UnitedHeartland.com/walksafe](https://www.unitedheartland.com/walksafe) or contact your UH Loss Control representative for more information.



Here are several questions to consider to reduce overall exposure for your employees:

- How much foot traffic exists with organizations that have multiple locations? Could operations be slightly modified to reduce foot traffic between locations?
- Do staff consider the need to go outside before they do so? Could they send an email or text or call a co-worker prior to being exposed to the snow/ice hazards?
- What policies exist for employees that work in the community? When inclement weather occurs, what is the policy for cancelling “non-critical” meetings?
- Can locations with multiple employee entrances limit their entrances in inclement weather? For example, for a building with five employee entrances/exits, can resources be focused on eliminating snow/ice hazards on two of the entrances/exits and communicate this to staff? (See critical note below.)
- Has the organization identified ideal employee entrances and parking areas? Many factors go into this assessment, including walk distance, terrain, likelihood of snow/ice accumulation and ability to maintain these walkways.
- How is snow piled and stored? If possible, the majority of snow should be located in areas where the melting, and eventual refreezing, does not intersect with employee walkways.
- Has the organization considered adjoining buildings or installing heated walkways? While these may be expensive, the average cost of a winter slip and fall can be as much as \$10,000 and can help justify a return on investment.

Winter slip and fall exposure is extremely difficult to control, especially in areas prone to inclement winter weather. But making minor changes to reduce the number of steps that employees take on snow and ice may help to avoid a lost time injury in the future.

Critical note: If employee entrances are limited, the organization must ensure that employees can still use these doors as emergency exits; hence, they need to be maintained. For example, snow accumulation needs to be removed near these entrances to allow for door swing out in the direction of exit travel and also not restrict their movement to your company’s exterior meeting place/location. Here is a link to OSHA’s Evacuation Plans and Procedures eTool, which is a valuable resource on this topic:

<https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/etools/evacuation/index.html>.

Contact your UH Loss Control representative for other evacuation resources.

