

Old Man Winter

It's that time again -"Old Man Winter" will be arriving soon! With that comes a dealership's risk for winter related injuries. Slips/falls and muscle strains are common injuries that result from winter conditions. Many of these injuries can be prevented if you plan ahead. Here are some tips that can help you prepare your dealership for "Old Man Winter".

Prepare a Winter Safety Plan

Every dealership should have a winter safety plan. These plans can protect your business from unexpected accidents. Slips/falls are the most common type of injury to occur during the winter months because of wet, icy conditions, but there are many steps that can be taken before the storm hits that can minimize your dealership's risk for loss. Similarly, if there is no pre-plan for snow removal, you could be looking at a significant back injury. The key to a successful winter safety plan is to prepare your plan before the winter season begins and execute the plan at the first sign of an approaching storm.

The following self-assessment will aid in development of your own winter safety plan.

Before the Storm

1. Who will make arrangements for snow removal, both in parking lots and walkways? Subcontractor or staff?
2. Is all winter weather equipment available and in good repair? i.e. plows, shovels, blowers, brooms, floor mats, ice-melt pellets, etc.
3. Is there a communication plan established? Supervisors should have emergency contact information available to inform employees of changing weather conditions that affect the dealership's business hours.
4. Is there an emergency work crew? It is usually not necessary to require all employees to report to work during (or just after) a snow/ice storm. So, consider keeping only a skeleton crew on-site during bad weather, or until conditions improve.
5. Are "winter weather" safety meetings conducted with staff to prepare them for pending conditions? (See "Walking on Slick Surfaces" below)
6. Can new vehicles be placed inside the buildings or relocated to a covered shelter?
7. If new vehicles will be exposed to weather, have you carefully selected the most appropriate staff to remove snow from these vehicles? Selecting the right person for the job is critical.

During the Storm

1. Consider keeping the dealership closed during a storm. Sales are typically slow during a snow or ice storm. Or
2. If you must stay open for business, consider keep only designated persons (i.e. managers) on site during bad weather.

After the Storm

1. When preparing for re-opening of business, be sure that all entrances/exits and walkways leading to these entrances are cleared of snow and ice.
2. Snow removal -Subcontract the work to qualified professionals if possible. If using staff to remove snow, utilize appropriate equipment and limit manual labor.
3. Be sure that plowed snow **does not** block access to cleared walkways.
4. Consider using designated entrances/exits, and close off slick walkways until they are completely clear.
5. As ice/snow melts, there will be numerous puddles of water. Monitor the interior and exterior walking areas to remove all pooling water promptly.
6. Permit business casual dress attire during wintry weather and encourage use of rubber soled shoes (no heels, no leather) to improve shoe traction.
7. Apply double mats at entrances to effectively dry shoes and promote good shoe traction on floors.
8. Keep vehicles away from shaded pavement areas that don't get much sunshine to melt away icy areas. The less traffic there is around icy areas, the less risk for slip/falls.
9. Place dry floor mats along enclosed service lanes to limit access to wet floors from melting snow.
10. If shoveling snow, shovel small amounts at a time. Remove ice or slush before shoveling the entire load (to limit excessive weight). Use proper posture- keep your back straight and lift gently from the knees and hips.
11. If working outside, dress warmly and in layers that can be removed as needed.
12. Take frequent breaks to avoid overheating.

Walking on Slick Surfaces

Believe it or not, there is an art to walking on slick surfaces. Take some time to share these walking tips with your staff before a storm approaches.

1. Wear appropriate shoes, preferably rubber soled.
2. Take small steps to keep your center of balance.
3. Always look forward, and keep your eyes on where you are stepping.
4. Avoid overloading. Don't carry loads that you can't see over.
5. Use handrails when available.
6. Walk slowly and never run on icy ground.
7. Walk around puddles of water, don't walk through them.
8. Test potentially slick areas by tapping your foot on them before proceeding.
9. Most importantly, don't rush or take short-cuts, it could cost you.

No matter how well the snow and ice is removed from parking lots and sidewalks, employees will encounter some slippery surfaces when walking outdoors in the winter. So, teach them to be prepared for a fall. Do not panic and be on the lookout for where they tread!

IMPORTANT NOTICE: This risk control Sample Program provided by PMA Companies is intended to help support your loss prevention efforts. It is not intended to be complete or definitive in discovering or identifying all hazards associated with your business, preventing workplace accidents, or complying with any safety related or other laws or regulations. You are encouraged to address the specific hazards of your business and have your legal counsel review all of your plans and company policies.