

## **In this issue of the Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) Listserv – November 6, 2024**

1. Stormwater Illicit Discharges & Reporting
  2. Avoid Wintertime Injury
  3. Safe Winter Walking Part Two
  4. Safety Short – Office Safety
  5. What is the Role of the Safety Data Sheet?
  6. Near Miss or Near Hit?
- 

### **1. Stormwater Illicit Discharges & Reporting**

What is stormwater “illicit discharge”? A stormwater illicit discharge is a flow from an outfall to a receiving water body that contains pollutants and/or pathogens. Often, these illicit discharge flows occur in dry weather and can be difficult to witness. Common examples of sources of reportable illicit discharges to receiving waters are:

- Detergents from washing vehicles/equipment
- Sewage and sanitary sewer cross connections
- Animal waste
- Illegal dumping
- Improper storage or disposal of trash
- Improper storage or disposal of chemicals, fertilizers, or regulated wastes.
- Oils and antifreeze releases
- Sediment laden discharges
- Discharges from concrete washout
- Discharges that contain films, suds, color, odor, oil sheen, high temperature, high salinity, chlorine

To learn more about stormwater management program and to view a map of storm sewer discharge locations visit the UNL EHS Stormwater Management website at [ehs.unl.edu/stormwater-management-unl](https://ehs.unl.edu/stormwater-management-unl) and review the Stormwater Infrastructure Maps for East Campus, City Campuses and Nebraska Innovation Center.

EHS provides a reporting tool intended to allow any person to submit information regarding storm water quality issues on the University of Nebraska-Lincoln campus. EHS wants you to be involved in the quest to ensure that campus activities do not hurt our environment.

Let's all do our part in maintaining a safe and clean environment by reporting illicit discharges that you observe. Report suspected illicit discharges that are not time-critical through the online Stormwater Pollution Reporter tool on the Environmental Health and Safety website. Contact the UNL Police Department if there is an immediate threat to human health or the environment. EHS will follow up on all reported environmental concerns regarding stormwater discharges when reported through either of these avenues.

This information will be used by the Environmental Health and Safety Department to follow up on stormwater related illicit discharge and/or spills, construction site complaints, or illegal dumping. Please immediately report anything that may cause direct or substantial harm/distress to the environment (e.g., petroleum spill, fish kill, etc.). If you would like to contact us directly, call 402.472.4925.

## Resources

- Stormwater Pollution Reporting Form <https://ehs.unl.edu/stormwater-pollution-reporting-form>

## 2. Avoid Wintertime Injury

Tips to avoid injury incidents when walking and working or otherwise being outdoors in snowy/icy/cold conditions are the focus of this article. Let's begin by reviewing suggestions for "walking." Walking around campus or from your vehicle/bus to your workplace during the winter can be hazardous. Every winter, slip/trip/fall injuries at UNL attributed to snow and ice account for approximately 3% of the overall number of injuries. That may not sound like much...until YOU are one of the injured.

**Winter Walking.** Just like winter driving, winter walking requires anticipation. Think "defensive walking." Follow these guidelines to help avoid injury:

- Use **appropriate footwear** for the surface/conditions. Avoid slick-soled shoes. Wear boots/shoes/overshoes with grip soles such as rubber or neoprene composite.
- Plan ahead to give yourself **sufficient time** to reach your destination.
- Plan your route and **watch where you walk**. Avoid routes that have not been cleared or appear glazed over.

- **Avoid carrying** large/heavy/awkward-shaped objects that can obstruct your view or affect your balance or center of gravity. Consider a backpack instead or use of a cart.
- Use special care in **parking lots**. Try to park in areas free of ice. When entering/exiting your vehicle, use your vehicle for support.
- Think about the **walking surfaces** whenever you move about campus, especially following sunny days. Some areas previously cleared may have partially thawed and refrozen, especially near the edges, leaving a glaze of ice.
- Use caution when **entering a building** as any snow left on your footwear will thaw with the building heat. Notice if the floor is wet from previous entrants. Avoid such indoor wet areas and if they cannot be avoided, traverse them the same as you would walk on ice. Contact Custodial Services to inquire about equipping areas prone to track-in with walk-off mats.
- **Pay complete attention** to your walking. Don't talk on the phone or text, search for items in your purse/briefcase, get distracted by greetings/conversation, think ahead to events of the upcoming day, etc.
- Always use "**defensive walking**" techniques. Watch for hazards like black ice.

If you must walk on slippery surfaces:

- Take short steps or shuffle your feet. Walk slowly so you can react quickly to a change in traction.
- Bend slightly as you walk to keep your center of gravity over your feet. Curl your toes under and walk as "flat-footed" as possible.
- Test potentially slick areas by tapping your foot on them before proceeding.
- Avoid uneven areas and stepping up/down onto icy areas such as from curbs.
- Keep your hands out of your pockets. Use your arms for balance. Imagine you are going to "walk like a penguin."

**Winter Outdoor Safety.** Next, let's look at safety outdoors in the elements. There are a number of hazards associated with working outside in cold weather. Be aware of potential hazards, their warning signs, and how to avoid the hazard.

- **Hypothermia.** In cold weather, your body may lose heat faster than it is produced. Prolonged exposure will eventually use up all your body's stored energy, resulting in an abnormally low body temperature. If low body temperature affects your brain, you may not be able to think clearly or realize you are in trouble. Warning signs include shivering, fatigue, and loss of coordination.
- **Frostbite.** Frostbite is an injury caused by freezing, characterized by reduced blood flow, leading to lack of feeling and color in the affected body parts. Most often the body parts affected are nose, fingers, toes, ears, cheeks, or chin. Warning signs include numbness, aching, tingling or stinging, bluish or pale skin, and skin that feels unusually firm or waxy.
- **Chilblains.** Repeatedly exposing skin to cold temperatures can cause permanent damage to groups of small blood vessels in the skin, characterized by redness and itching that return with subsequent exposures. Body parts most often affected are cheeks, ears, fingers, and toes. Warning signs include redness, itching, blistering/ulcers, and inflammation.

**Prevention** is always the best policy to avoid cold stress or injury. Here are some precautions workers should take if they must work in extreme cold:

- **Wear appropriate clothing.** Clothing layered and not too tight, provides insulation yet allows good blood circulation. Wear footwear designed for cold, wet conditions.
- **Cover your head** to reduce body heat loss. Protect ears, face, hands, and feet.
- **Try to schedule work** for the warmest/driest/least windy part of the day. Take regular breaks in a warm, dry, and protected area. Limit the total amount of time outside during extremely cold weather.
- **Do not touch** cold metal surfaces with bare skin.
- **Stay hydrated** by drinking plenty of fluids, especially warm fluids. Avoid drinks with sugar and/or caffeine.
- **Avoid exhaustion or fatigue** because energy is necessary to keep muscles warm.
- **Be aware that certain medications you are taking might make you more susceptible** to cold stress. Certain medical conditions also

increase your risk: diabetes, high blood pressure, or cardiovascular disease.

- **Monitor your physical condition** and that of your co-workers. You may not be aware of warning signs that a co-worker would be able to observe.
- **Monitor weather.** A National Weather Service Wind Chill Chart will help you evaluate temperature/wind combinations to enable you to work more safely outdoors when the weather is cold.

Other wintertime hazards, often related to snow cleanup, but also applicable in other outdoor work situations are:

- Lacerations or amputations from improperly attempting to clear jams in snow removal equipment. Make certain all powered equipment is properly guarded, isolated from power sources, and all parts have stopped moving before performing maintenance or attempting to clear a jam.
- Strains and sprains from the prolonged or improper use of shovels or other snow removal equipment. Keep in mind body movement and positioning. Avoid overexertion.

## Resources

- EHS Safe Operating Procedure **Cold Stress** [https://ehs.unl.edu/sop/s-cold\\_stress.pdf](https://ehs.unl.edu/sop/s-cold_stress.pdf)
- National Weather Service (NWS) Wind Chill Chart <https://www.weather.gov/safety/cold-wind-chill-chart>
- OSHA. “Cold Stress Quick Card: Protecting Workers from Cold Stress” <https://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3156.pdf>
- OSHA “Winter Weather: Plan. Equip. Train.” [https://www.osha.gov/dts/weather/winter\\_weather/hazards\\_precautions.html](https://www.osha.gov/dts/weather/winter_weather/hazards_precautions.html)
- Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC). “Working in the Cold.” [https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/cold-stress/about/?CDC\\_AAref\\_Val=https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/coldstress/](https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/cold-stress/about/?CDC_AAref_Val=https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/coldstress/)

## 3. Safe Winter Walking Part Two

Every year there are several slip, trip and fall injury incidents at UNL related to walking in winter conditions. According to the National Safety Council, more than 25,000 slips, trips, and falls happen every day in the United States – one

every 17 minutes. Winter poses a unique challenge for preventing slips, trips, and falls. Areas to pay special attention to are:

- Building entrances, inside and out
- Parking lots
- Sidewalks

We think of snow and ice as being a potential slip/trip/fall hazards, but frost or even rain can lead to slippery conditions. Start a hazard mitigation strategy by evaluating any uneven area or hard-to-see curbs or steps. Check illumination in parking lots and on sidewalks since days are shorter. Being able to see well is important for navigating areas prone to ice. Sufficient walk-off matting should be installed inside building entrances to reduce tracked-in water/snow and debris.

Removing snow and ice from all exterior walking areas helps avoid potentially hazardous situations. Notice where water tends to puddle up or snow tends to drift and take steps to avoid these areas. Remember loading docks where workers and perhaps carts need to traverse. Staircases outdoors should be visible with reflective tape to mark hard-to-see surfaces and ideally have an anti-slip tread or strip.

Complete a safety walk around your facility and parking lot weekly or in adverse weather to minimize the chance of an injury slip, trip or fall. Note any changes since the last inspection such as seasonal changes, spills or stray objects that have appeared and might interfere with the walking surface. Note the tips provided in the SAFE Winter Walking posters available through EHS.

Finally, prepare yourself:

- Wear proper footwear, ideally with good rubber tread.
- Take short steps and walk at a slower pace.

Order and post these three EHS safety posters to share safe winter walking safety tips with others in your area! Requests may be made by phone (402.472.4925) or email ([ehs@unl.edu](mailto:ehs@unl.edu)). Posters may be picked up or delivered via campus mail. To use campus mail please provide your name, building, room number and zip code including the 4 numbers after the dash. These posters are also available in electronic format for display on digital signage.



## Resources

- Really Obvious: On Ice  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Gv6QNZytF8&list=PLh0k4GzppsqEYnCNx-fxPRIdpC-hERTQH&index=17>
- OSHA Preventing Slips on Snow and Ice  
[https://www.osha.gov/dts/weather/winter\\_weather/hazards\\_precautions.html#walking](https://www.osha.gov/dts/weather/winter_weather/hazards_precautions.html#walking)
- Safe Winter Walking (EMC Insurance Companies, 2:09 minutes)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UzuwagOimck>
- Walk Like a Penguin (AHSChannel, duration 1:37)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LHaWGibGwyk>

## 4. Safety Short – Office Safety

Office workers and theoretical researchers often think there are no potential hazards in their workplace. The following video provides tips on various aspects of office safety.

- Office Safety: Essential Tips for a Safe Workplace (Safelyio, 4:07 min)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=80A3yPevKT4>

NOTE: This resource is provided for informational purposes only. Publication does not in any way endorse a particular company or product or affect current UNL policies and procedures.

## 5. What is the Role of the Safety Data Sheet?

All UNL personnel who work where chemicals are used or stored should take the EHS applicable Chemical Safety online training:

- Chemical Safety 4-unit training is targeted to researchers that use a wide variety of chemicals. Each of the four units are taken individually.
- There are EHS online targeted chemical and general safety trainings for those who use limited classes of chemicals. There are targeted trainings for Custodial Services, Custodial Operations & Nebraska Unions custodians, Dining Services, Facility/Utility/Grounds Maintenance workers, and Visual & Performing Arts.

One key item of each training is information on Safety Data Sheets and their role in workplace safety. Safety Data Sheets provide important information. How much do you know about Safety Data Sheets?

Review the information at this online location to test yourself.

[https://www.safetyandhealthmagazine.com/articles/25955-oshas-updated-hazcom-standard-whats-changed?utm\\_source=sfmc&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=dailysep24&utm\\_content=](https://www.safetyandhealthmagazine.com/articles/25955-oshas-updated-hazcom-standard-whats-changed?utm_source=sfmc&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=dailysep24&utm_content=) . Then scroll down to find out by accessing “QUIZ: What role does a Safety Data Sheet play in workplace safety.” The quiz will let you know what the correct answers should be. Then scroll down to also access to a GHS Quiz to match the pictogram to the hazard.

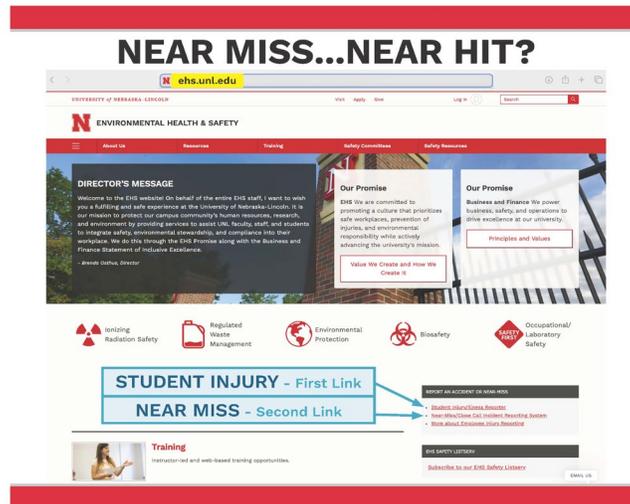
## 6. Near Miss or Near Hit?

The Chancellor’s University Safety Committee (CUSC) is reaffirming their goal to focus more intensely on Near Miss/Close Call reporting and to also encourage reporting of unsafe practices. To support that effort, the EHS “*Near Miss/Close Call Incident Reporting Form*” allows for reporting of unsafe practices.

By reporting all near misses, often thought of as “close calls,” or unsafe practices, you are contributing to a safer and healthier campus environment. Information reported is shared throughout the University for educational/awareness purposes. Specific identifying information (e.g., names, departments, etc.) is not included in informational publications. Participation will benefit the entire campus community. Be assured that there is no risk of repercussions for reporting a situation or hazard.

A “near miss” can also be viewed as a “near hit!” Next time you see something and think, “This could have ended up very badly,” report that circumstance online to help your fellow workers throughout the university stay safe.

If you would like a poster or posters to post in your area and also a digital file for electronic display boards in your area contact [ehs@unl.edu](mailto:ehs@unl.edu) or call 402.472.4925.



## Resources

- Near-Miss/Close Call Incident Reporting Form <https://ehs.unl.edu/near-missclose-call-incident-reporting-form>

**Adopt Safety as Your Attitude – DON'T LEARN BY ACCIDENT!**

## Environmental Health and Safety

University of Nebraska-Lincoln

3630 East Campus Loop

Lincoln, NE 68583-0824

4402.472.4925

<http://ehs.unl.edu>

~To SUBSCRIBE and get your own copy if you received this from someone else use this link: <https://mailman.nebraska.edu/mailman3/lists/ehsinfo.lists.unl.edu/>