

# Winter Storm Clean Up- Safety is in the Details

Winter storms create a variety of hazards that can have lingering impacts on everyday work activities. Each employer is responsible for the safety and health of its employees and for providing a safe and healthful workplace for its workers.

Employers are required to protect its workers for the anticipated hazards associated with winter storm response and recovery operations that workers are likely to conduct. Cleaning up after a winter snow/ ice event encompasses a variety of tasks each which may carry risks if done incorrectly or without proper safeguards.

## **Common Hazards Include:**

- Electrical shock from contact with downed power lines or use of ungrounded electric equipment
- Falls from clearing ice jams in gutters and from snow removal on roofs while working in aerial lifts or on ladders
- Being struck or crushed by trees/ branches/ structures that collapse under the weight of accumulated snow and ice
- Back injuries and heart attack while shoveling or removing snow
- Lacerations/ amputations from using unguarded equipment/ improper use of chain saws and power tools and improperly clearing jams from snowblowers
- Hypothermia or frostbite from exposure to cold temperatures
- Slips and falls on icy or snow-covered walking surfaces

## **Addressing Hazards Can Include:**

- Assuming all power lines are energized and coordinating with utility companies
- Making certain that all electrical equipment is grounded
- Providing and ensuring use of fall protection
- Proper use and maintenance of ladders
- Using caution around surfaces weighted down with snow/ice
- Using head/ eye/ body protection
- Wearing reflective clothing and clothing for cold weather
- Scooping small amounts of snow and using proper lifting techniques to avoid over-exertion
- Clearing walking surfaces using ice melt products

## **Also:**

When clearing snow from roofs and working at heights after a storm, workers should employ standard protection when working on a roof and should be aware of the potential for unexpected hazards due to weather. Employers should provide and ensure the use of fall protection and provide and maintain ladders. In addition, roof surfaces should be inspected to see if they have been weighted down by snow and ice, as collapse is possibility.

If a snowblower is to be used, employers should instruct the employees as to the dangers associated with its use.

- ✓ Make sure they are properly grounded
- ✓ Make sure they are guarded

When performing maintenance or clearing a jam:

- ✓ Never use your hand to clear a jam
- ✓ Turn off the machine and wait 5 seconds
- ✓ Use a long stick or a chute stick to clear snow or debris
- ✓ Keep hands and feet away from moving parts
- ✓ Do not add fuel to a running or hot engine